# INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY

*By the Same Author.*

"THE USE OF SCIENCE TO CHRISTIANS."

"REASON IN REVELATION."

"LAW AND FREEDOM."

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# INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY

By E. M. CAILLARD

AUTHOR OF "PROGRESSIVE REVELATION," ETC.


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# PREFACE

THE object of the present little volume is to bring forward certain considerations on Individual Immortality which, it seems to the writer, have not received sufficient attention. So great a subject is inevitably too many-sided to be grasped in its entirety by any one mind, or, we may add, in any one age. It presents, as do all subjects of widely human interest, not only a high-road for practical and speculative thought, but many attractive by-paths. Thus it has come to pass that side issues have not infrequently occupied a larger share of attention than the main question itself. The lengthy and too often bitter discussions on the existence and nature of reward and punishment in a

future life are an illustration in point. We hear less of them now, perhaps chiefly because many people doubt the reality of that life itself. To enter into the reasons for this uncertainty would be to forestall the enquiry undertaken in the following pages. The writer's aim throughout the book is to show how far more reasonable from the scientific and philosophic points of view, and how far fuller from the Christian point of view, is the belief in individual immortality, than the greater number of those who accept or deny it at all realise.

She has further attempted to point out its vast practical issues in the life that now is.

The prominence and importance of individuality in the Social Order have been obscured by confusing it with individualism, and in the Natural Order by a misconception of the significance of modern scientific theories of evolution. The first step, therefore, towards approaching the question of Immortality with any adequacy is to vindicate the true position

of the Individual in the general scheme of things. To this attempt chapters ii., iii., and iv. of the present volume are devoted. Chapter i. indicates the deep personal and social importance of the enquiry to be undertaken, and chapter v. endeavours to delineate the Christian Ideal of Immortality as it exists in the New Testament.

Each branch of the subject has been treated in some detail; but it is hoped with sufficient brevity and lucidity to present no great difficulty of apprehension to that large class of persons precluded by the pressure of their daily avocations from any continuous study of modern science and philosophy and their bearing on the great matter at issue. We are all profoundly interested in the question of our individual survival of death. We are not all in a position to weigh for ourselves the evidence for its reality or unreality, and too many of us stand in doubt. It is to the doubters chiefly that the writer ventures to address herself, in the hope that the considerations she adduces may be of

some assistance in enabling them to overcome their uncertainty.

In conclusion, she desires to thank the Editor of the *Contemporary Review* for permission to reprint the first four Chapters of the present Book, they having originally appeared under his auspices.

EMMA MARIE CAILLARD.

*June* 1903.

NOTE.—The Scriptural quotations are throughout made from the Revised Version.

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# INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY

## CHAPTER I

### URGENCY OF THE ENQUIRY

It is thought by many that the great question suggested by the title of this book—viz., that of survival after death, is not among the most pressing problems of the age; that for once at any rate the highest and the most practical points of view coincide, and that to "leave the world a little better than he found it," to add some iota of material benefit, of scientific knowledge, or of philosophic truth, to the general store, accumulating through the passing generations for the generations yet to come, is at once the wisest, the most feasible, and the most unselfish aim that a man can set before himself. Regard for a life beyond the grave, an ordering of the present life so that the interests of this larger life to come may be subserved, is looked upon somewhat

askance and dubbed as "otherworldliness," a mere recrudescence under a specious form of selfish individualism. Even Christian Ideals have been modified by this prevailing tendency of thought. The amelioration of the "life that now is" has become a foremost—we might almost say the foremost—aim of the Churches, social regeneration being apparently the one watchword they have in common, the one ground on which they consent to bury differences and unite forces for the general weal.

There is unmixed good in this widespread and practical recognition of the Golden Rule, this frank acknowledgment that we are our brother's keeper, and that it is folly and worse than folly to preach to his "immortal soul" while no effort is made to raise and purify the conditions in which his mortal body pines and languishes. So much is unquestionably true, and the crusade against ignorance, under-payment, over-crowding, foul air, vicious surroundings which the earnest-hearted in all Christian bodies support and pursue, in unison (to their honour be it said,) with many who obey the maxims while they repudiate the dogmas of "traditional Christianity," is more worthy of the name of "holy war" than

any which has preceded it in the annals of mankind.

And yet this appreciation of the value of life now and here, of its possibilities, of the seemingly cruel and unnecessary obstacles which lie in the way of their fulfilment, has its own dangers. Not to speak for the moment of those which are more purely spiritual, the fact that so large a proportion of hope, effort and desire are concentrated on the life that now is, is productive of an over-eagerness for visible results which is apt to defeat its own end. There would be less of the unrest, the unwise haste, the disappointment, which too often characterise and impede workers in the cause of social regeneration, if they were able to realise that even in the case of individuals there is a larger hope, a wider outlook than this present life affords. And indeed such an encouragement is sorely needed by those who know anything of its conditions to the majority of human beings living under the sway of our boasted Western civilisation. None, save a few irresponsible enthusiasts, can deceive themselves into the belief that the vast problems involved, the radical changes necessitated,

will even be faced in the comprehensive and thorough-going manner which alone could avail, in the lifetime of the present generation, in all probability of others to come. And if in the end the Utopia of philanthropists is realised, and peace, sufficiency, and the means of full self-development are placed within the reach of all, there yet remains the tale of ruined lives and uncompensated suffering through which its attainment will have been achieved.

For were full social regeneration capable of immediate accomplishment, individual life would not be rendered satisfactory. Under present conditions, even when, as human experience goes, they are altogether favourable, man never appears to himself to attain the true zenith of his powers. There is always a beyond which could quite conceivably be reached were this or that limitation, perhaps the universal one of the shortness of life, removed. The old man may indeed, owing to the very decay of vitality which causes it, acquiesce calmly in the arrest of his powers, but would he do so before decay has touched him, when body and mind are still in full vigour and activity?

Let each man in possession of the *mens sana in corpore sano* ask this question of himself. And indeed if the first half of the condition alone be fulfilled, it is hard for a man to give up the hope of achievements for which he feels full mental capacity on account of physical infirmity, whether the latter be due to age or to illness. Those who have read the Letters of J. R. Green will remember the pathetic exclamation uttered when it was supposed he had but six weeks to live: "I have so much work to do." As a matter of fact his frail life had yet two years to run, and he accomplished — kept alive, his physician said, more by sheer force of will than anything else,—the chief part of the task which lay so near his heart. But can it be doubted that even then his intellectual power was unexhausted, and that had it not been for physical limitations and premature death, far more would have been successfully attempted? The same remark applies with even more force to one whose death came with a shock of surprise to friend and foe alike: "So much to do, so little done," are reported to have been the last words of Cecil Rhodes, who in his

fiftieth year had to leave unfinished at a peculiarly critical period a gigantic task to which perhaps no other living man is equal. Nor are such cases exceptional, save in the particulars of unusual talent and energy. We have but to run over in our minds the list of our personal friends and acquaintance, and we shall find that in the case of successful and unsuccessful alike a falling short of possibilities is the rule. So and so has done well, but he might have done so much better *if*—and then follows the inevitable qualification; or such another would have succeeded, *but* he was overweighted by poverty, or family cares, by ill-health, or by some other of the ordinary hindrances of ordinary life.

Again there is the injurious effect on others than the individual immediately concerned, which this individual limitation occasions. The statesman who is lost to his country's councils just when she is most in need of him, the mother who is snatched from her children at the age when they chiefly require her care, and the loss of whose tender watchfulness in early years is felt to the end of life, the father whose counsel and ripe experience

would have been invaluable to the son just setting forth on his career, but whose voice is silenced by death at the moment when it seemed indispensable, these and countless other instances are so familiar that even to mention them savours of the trite. Each time, however, that they enter into a living experience they are felt with the same keen and bitter strength as though they were the first sorrow of the first man.

Social regeneration is no panacea for these things. It cannot secure to the individual the certainty that his powers shall ripen to their full development, that work which he has undertaken shall be accomplished, that his life shall last long enough to shelter, till shelter is no longer necessary, the lives dependent on him; that the desires either of affection or intellect shall come even near to satisfaction.

And if it is thus with the successful—for so far it is chiefly those whom the world would deem successful that we have been bearing in mind, in whose case there has been at any rate a partial fulfilment of their best potentialities,—what shall be said of the unsuccessful, of the world's failures, of the

incurably diseased, vicious, miserable, who might have been so different had their environment been different, who, had the halcyon days of social regeneration fallen to them, would at any rate have attained an ordinary level of virtue, decency, satisfaction? Does it content us to regard them as the necessary sacrifice to the well-being of future generations? Are the victims to war, pestilence, inefficient legislation; to their own and others' ignorance, neglect or despair, mere age-long object-lessons of how not to live? Our intellectual and moral nature alike shrinks from thus regarding them. And it is this fact, quite as much as our private needs, aspirations and affections, which makes of immortality primarily an individual question. We ask indeed, at moments when the brevity and uncertainty of life are personally brought home to us by bereavement or the first warnings that our physical powers have passed their zenith: "Shall I survive? Will those I love survive? Will the desires, the capacities that have never found fruition here 'bloom to profit other where?'" But it is at times of wider sympathy, when not our own lot

nor that of any dear ones within the narrow circle of home and friendship, is chiefly present to us, that we realise the awful futility of individual life if death indeed be its term.

Nor are such questionings satisfied, though they may be silenced, by the representation that no life can cease to be, and that the perishing of its individual forms no more affects its persistence than the subsidence of ocean waves into a great calm, affects the persistence of the ocean itself. The merging of the finite in the Infinite cannot be rightly called death; yet to the general mind, the term life is even less appropriate.

It is individual persistence in personal powers and consciousness that to the great majority of men constitutes immortality. If this persistence be denied, they care little for the possibility of survival as unconscious component parts of a whole which they can never know, and which needs them merely for the sake of its own completeness. There is nothing in such immortality as this (if indeed it may even lay claim to the name), to inspire, to deter or to fortify, save

perhaps a few philosophers to whom the life and ardour of humanity are of less importance than intellectual abstractions and rounded logical systems. To the minds of all ordinary men it makes, and it ought to make, a vast difference in the duty of each individual *now*, whether his outlook, not as regards himself only, but all other individuals past, present, and to come, reaches beyond earth. The training and discipline which would suffice for mortals, the conditions of life, the power of perseverance and endeavour, the outlook of hope which would be great enough for them, are wholly inadequate for immortals. These, too, need not shrink as mortals must from apparent failure, or certain suffering either in their own case or in that of others. The issues of life are so large that illimitable courage should be theirs.

A real living belief (not a mere intellectual acquiescence), in the continuity of individual human life has issues of infinitely greater importance to society at large than those which it debates with such fervour and heat. It can hardly be said that we are in a position to estimate them as yet. One thing how-

ever should be abundantly plain. If death is indeed no break in life, but merely an entrance into different conditions of life, this fact of itself should weigh immensely in education. Before it could do so, however, a public opinion in favour of its practical importance would have to be created. At present what public opinion is brought to bear on the subject leans all the other way. To think much of life beyond the grave is supposed to unfit us for work in the world as it is. But if it were realised that the individual's present work is but the first stage in work to be carried on by that same individual with keener insight and larger powers beyond death, work in itself, and in its results infinitely greater than he can grasp now (just as the vast range of literary attainment and possibilities is beyond the grasp of the child learning the alphabet), then the most practical thing that could be done would be to bear in mind the continuity of work here and work hereafter. It would assist as nothing else could do to direct activity to work that is worthy of so high a destiny, to open our eyes to the fact that all necessary work, even if it concern only the lowliest earthly requirements, may

be not the prelude to merely, but the basis of work which is eternal in its scope and issues. Even better than the work of poet, artist, and statesman, humble duties may serve as that training and discipline of character which are the chief requisites for high avocations and far-reaching responsibilities. Our chief aim, if convinced that we are immortal, would therefore be so to think and work that when we take that "one step past the entrance door" to fuller life, neither we nor others through our action, should be weighted by limitations which our experience under earthly conditions should have taught us to surmount. This would debar none from giving their full energy to every honourable profession and pursuit, but it would immeasurably raise the standard of individual effort and responsibility. It would save the artist and the author from prostituting talent to win the poor meed of contemporary or posthumous fame, the statesman from committing his fellow-countrymen to a policy which far-seeing wisdom condemns, either for the sake of present popularity or a name which posterity should call great. It would save the educator from aiming at

immediate results rather than eliciting the true personality, the best self in the young people committed to his charge, and the philanthropist from adopting hasty expedients which, though they may give momentary relief, are no true medicine for the social body. It would rob detraction of its keenest pangs and take the edge off all disappointment. And this being the case, it would set free even under actual conditions, an amazing amount of human energy and capacity which are at present cramped and stunted by the overhanging fear that whatever the individual cannot accomplish before death is, so far as the individual himself is concerned, incomplete. He may sow, but another will reap; he may labour, but another will enter into the fruit of his labours; he shall not himself see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Nor need we condemn such a feeling as egotistic. To do so would be to run counter to a universal human characteristic, the characteristic of all others which raises man beyond animal to spiritual life, the capacity to perceive, and the determination to strive after, the Ideal. The man who has such

faith in the reality of his ideal that he can say "It will come to pass though I shall not see it," is strong; but he who can assert "It will come to pass and I shall see it," is stronger still. This is the strength that belief in the continuity of individual personality after death should give to every man in whom it is a living active power, and not a half acquiesced-in truth which has no practical bearing on life as it is now.

Another effect, far-reaching in its results, but more purely personal than any which has yet been touched on, might well be produced, viz.: the more strenuous endeavour on the part of each individual to attain to the Divine Ideal for him, to fulfil the Divine Conception of his own being. There is a certain school of thought, of which Nietzsche may be regarded as one of the principal prophets and exponents, which insists before all else upon self-realisation as the one important end of individual life. "Be yourself," is the cry of these teachers: "Be what you are, whether that be what is conventionally called good or evil. Experience all you can, live all you can. Fulfil yourself in every way that is open to you,

regardless of any consequence so only that you can achieve and complete yourself." Let this advice be taken by one whose outlook is limited to life on earth, and in most instances we know but too well the lamentable physical and moral wreck which would ensue. But widen the horizon. Say as before: Fulfil, complete yourself, yet bear in mind that Self's undying Nature, that as you are making it now, so will it start beyond death with larger powers, a greater scope, an unforgotten past. Be therefore not only yourself, but true to your Self. Do not prostitute it, do not place in its hands that awful power of reproach so terribly depicted by Rossetti in one of the finest of his sonnets, where he exclaims that at death—

> 'God knows I know the faces I shall see,
> Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
> "I am thyself, what hast thou done to me?"
> "And I—and I—thyself" (lo! each one saith),
> "And thou thyself to all eternity."'

The first all-important point to be considered is then whether we have indeed assured ground for the belief in that individual persistence after death without which

immortality is but a meaningless name. To Christians who are firm in their faith, the question is already answered in the affirmative, but those who have a strong practical grasp of that article of their creed "the life everlasting," are not the majority. Many of whom it would be alike presumptuous and untrue to assert that they do not believe it, nevertheless feel an uncertainty and doubtfulness very inimical to that rest of heart and strength of purpose which should be theirs. It seems to them that not only the world around them, but the teaching of Science, perhaps of Philosophy, is against their faith in this respect, and they are distressed, unable to give a reason for the hope that is in them, or in fact do more than cling to it as too vital and too precious to renounce, but too fragile to bear examination.

It is not thus—on sufferance as it were—that so splendid and uplifting a belief should be held; and the purpose of the present volume is first to enquire briefly what Science and Philosophy have to say on this great subject, next to consider its ethical bearings, and lastly to examine the Christian Standpoint, and the Christian Ideal.

And since, as we have above remarked, immortality is primarily an individual question, our considerations will centre round the comprehensiveness and the importance of Individuality. The immensity of the universe as modern Science reveals it to us, the self-sufficing all-inclusiveness of the "Absolute," that central conception of much of the Idealistic Philosophy of our day, both these conceptions tend to make the individual of small account in comparison with the Whole, the All. And to a certain extent the result is a wider, less selfish appreciation of the cosmos and of man's place in it. But the tendency may easily be carried too far. There is a worth, a cosmical significance in individuality which we disregard at our peril, and one aspect of which the consideration of immortality brings strongly to our notice. This aspect will be found emphasized in the ensuing pages.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCIENTIFIC STANDPOINT

In approaching the consideration of Individual Immortality from the side of Science, we must be clear what it is we want to do, and what we may reasonably expect to do. It is a subject which (unlike the existence of God,) is conceivably open to scientific proof, that is to say, it turns upon a question of fact which comes, or which might come, within the province of physical experience. If one came back to us in visible form from that bourne whence (it is said) no traveller returns, broke the silence of death and spoke to us, or in some evident and physical way made known his presence among us again, that would be a fact of which Science could take cognisance, which it could examine, test and, if repeated, finally classify, for no unclassified phenomenon has, properly speaking, reached the scientific

stage. It is well known that men of undoubted scientific ability and attainment have, among other matters, this very one under consideration and experiment. It is also well known that it presents the most enormous difficulties to investigation, and the greatest facilities for deception and delusion. That is no reason why success should not ultimately be attained, and though in the belief of many, such researches are not only doubtful and difficult, but present distinct mental and moral dangers, that again is no reason why those who regard the importance of the end in view (scientific certainty one way or the other,) as outweighing all other considerations, should not, so long as they maintain the cool and dispassionate attitude of mind which should be characteristic of all scientific enquiry, continue their investigations.

The course of these and the results so far attained are open to all who choose to study the publications of the Society for Psychical Research, and their reproduction will not be attempted here. Our aim is different. Quite apart from these investigations there is generally thought to be justification for what

may be called a scientific presumption against the persistence of individual life after death. If this be the case, a greater weight of evidence is rightly demanded than would otherwise be necessary before it can be accepted as proved. Our object will be to enquire whether such justification does in fact exist, whether ascertained and classified facts do, so far, make against any confident belief in human immortality.

In the first place, it will be well to call to mind with what aspect of the universe and of man Science deals, so that we may see how far she has the right and the power of interpretation. She does not occupy herself with the physical alone. The phenomena of mind as well as body fall within her ken; "Mental Physiology" and "Psychological Physics," as well as pure Psychology, are important and well-recognised branches of her domain, and have advanced at least as much as those of older date. Facts, whether psychical or physical, are material for Science; her aim, is, first, to reduce their apparent chaos to order. Secondly, to discover and establish on a firm basis their relationships and sequences, and the conditions under which they are

produced, and to simplify as far as possible the expression of these relationships, sequences and conditions making the necessary formulæ as few and as comprehensive as possible. Finally, to be prepared at all points for the discovery of fresh facts, discarding any theory with which they are in evident disagreement. There is, however, one essential requisite for the work of Science. It is that the facts which are her raw material shall be located in space and time. If there be such things as facts or experiences which are non-temporal and non-spatial, with these Science in the ordinary acceptation of the term cannot deal. Clearly, therefore, any purely scientific interpretation of the universe and of man must be given in terms of space and time. Science has no vocabulary to transcend them. She cannot say that they are not transcendable or transcended; but she cannot herself pass beyond their bounds. We must endeavour to see what precisely this limitation involves.

Perhaps it may be most forcibly presented by the statement that the Scientific outlook is confined to the external aspect and significance of the universe, to the *body* of experience

as we may say. Its soul, its inner meaning, eludes the methods by which Science works, because these are only applicable where space and time are applicable. Consequently no scientific explanation or interpretation can be more than partially satisfactory. There is always a residuum left unaccounted for, and that residuum contains the "why" of all the "hows" that with infinite pains and toil Science has accumulated and co-ordinated. The existence of this residuum can be ignored or held of no account by any who are content to regard the universe as meaningless, but those who are sure that it has a meaning, still more those who hope that the meaning may be discoverable, are fain to seek some method of interpretation which does not pre-suppose space and time. Hence arises the need for philosophy. Philosophy endeavours to go behind the postulates which Science perforce accepts unquestioningly, and to examine their credentials. Our concern in the present chapter, however, is not with Philosophy but with Science, whose real value and importance are only appreciated when her limitations are recognised. She teaches us the course of things, not the reason of their being;

she exhibits them in their relation to time and space, and to the intellect of man, not in their relation to their ground and source, whatever that may be. Consequently she cannot reveal the secret or the meaning of their existence. Yet let none despise or underrate the work which is hers and which, though misleading, if supposed to comprise the whole range of knowledge, is nevertheless essential to its truth and validity. We can have no reliable metaphysics unless we have first made sure of our physics. In other words, without a faithful representation of the body of experience, we cannot hope to penetrate to that inner significance which we have ventured to call its soul.

So much being premised, let us turn our attention to the teaching of Science with regard to man, remembering that in his case, as in the case of the whole order of which he forms part, she is and can be presenting only one and that the outer aspect of his being.

The first and most important consideration which presents itself, is the demonstrated continuity of human life with the organic universe and with itself under very varying phases of existence. For our

present purpose we may leave on one side the first half of this thesis, taking it as proved that man as we know him has—as a race—ascended from and through lower types of life to his present position as the crown and cope of the known organic world. We are concerned more immediately with his individual aspect, and this we will proceed to consider in some detail.

Each human individual commences life as a single organic cell, not yet so far differentiated as to present distinctive animal characteristics. The cell undergoes a complicated process of subdivision, multiplies, the daughter cells behave in like manner, their aggregate taking to itself a more and more specialised form until first the vertebrate and then the human embryo comes into existence. The latter grows, its sex becomes apparent, its various organs commence their functions. At the end of a certain time it is ready to be born into the external world as a fully-formed human infant. Through all these prenatal changes and transmutations the individual life has been continuous, the cell is not the embryo, the embryo is not the infant, but the life of

the infant is one with the life of the embryo and the cell.

After birth further development is undergone. The infant grows, he shows signs of consciousness, then of self-consciousness, he gains the use and control of his limbs, he begins to understand something of himself and his relationship to his environment, he becomes capable of sympathy, love, friendship, his bodily and mental powers increase; finally, through childhood, boyhood and youth, he passes to the stage of fully developed manhood. And through all these changes, as through those that preceded birth, the individual life is continuous. The man differs from the youth, the youth from the boy, the boy from the child, the child from the infant, but the life of the man is the same life that was in the infant. More than this he identifies it as such. Since the first dawning of memory he knows that he has been the same. "It is I myself and not another who have passed through these transmutations. I was that child, that boy, that youth—I who am now the grown man." Nor do the changes cease here. The man has all his experience to

accumulate, and as the saying goes this process makes "a different man" of him. He is different at forty from thirty, at seventy from fifty, — different, for as he constantly asserts, "*I was* so-and-so, and so-and-so, now *I am* something else"; yet the same, for the difference does not consist in another individual having come into existence, but in one individual having passed through a continuous series of developments.

This fact of self-identity through difference is so entirely familiar, so completely a part (or rather the ground,) of everyday experience, that the plain man simply takes it for granted, guides his actions in accordance with it, and seldom realises that there is anything peculiar or requiring explanation about it. Let us for the moment accept this point of view, and turn our attention to another less immediately obvious truth which a study of modern science brings very prominently to our notice. This is the increase of individuality apparent as we rise in the scale of organic life. It has already been observed that in the earliest stage of the human embryo, the future man is not even so far differentiated as to

be distinctively animal. This fact is reproduced on a larger scale. All students of biology are familiar with those lowly and curious organisms which throughout their life-history retain both animal and vegetable characteristics, so that it is impossible to classify them correctly in either of the great divisions of the organic world. In higher organisms we no longer find this confusion existing, save in the earliest stages of their life-history. The adult forms leave no doubt as to the division in which we must place them; and as organic complexity increases, so does the oneness and distinctness of the individual life to which it ministers. Taking for convenience and brevity's sake illustrations from the animal kingdom alone, compare the individuality of an oyster with that of an ant or a bee, that of a bee with that of one of the higher vertebrates, a dog or an ape, that of an ape with that of a man.

Individuality, it must be remarked, has a double aspect, the outward and the inward, the outward being that by which an observer distinguishes one individual from others of the same kind, the inward that by which each

individual distinguishes and identifies himself. Taking man (as we perforce must do,) as our standard observer, we may notice that his difficulty in distinguishing one individual (of the same species,) from another, decreases in direct proportion with the degree of organic complexity attained. He would be sore put to it to identify an oyster, he would have little difficulty in identifying a dog or a horse; and it needs no argument to show that the oyster is almost, if not totally, deficient in that sense of self-identity which is the inner aspect of individuality, and which is possessed to a distinct extent by the higher animals and to an incomparably higher degree by man.[1] The inner and the outer aspects develop together; and man, who possesses both in the highest known degree, is the most individual being with whom Science has to deal. That constitutes the great difficulty of Science with regard to him. For despite her attention to details, and her accumulation of minute separate facts, she is very highly abstract in her aims. She descends

[1] See, however, on the sense of self-identity in the lower animals, the remarks made on p. 55 of the present work.

to particulars only to attain generalisation. Her great end is classification, her search is for types, and too persistent and assertive an individuality is her bane. She cannot away with it. Yet after all, the type exists quite as much for the individuals as the individuals for the type, and forgetfulness of this fact has caused a one-sidedness in scientific interpretations of man which need not have been incurred.

Even had this error been avoided, however, Science could never give a complete account of man, and that because she cannot view his individuality from within. None but the man himself can do that. Psychology classifies his mental conditions, feelings, activities, emotions, but that very fact precludes any but an external understanding of him. From the internal point of view he cannot be classified: he is unique. When all his mental experiences have been placed under their appropriate heads, perception, ideation, intellection, and the rest, he himself is conscious that the central point has never been touched, that all this, even when he has studied it in himself, is knowledge *about* him, but not knowledge *of* him. That

is still a closed door to which Science does not possess the "Open, sesame." It was perhaps inevitable, though infinitely to be regretted, that this being the case there should have been attempts to interpret man upon the important but evidently incomplete data that Science could accumulate, and judgment was pronounced from the outside point of view, the result being that man was declared to be nothing but a bundle of impressions,—a stream of consciousnesses which somehow or other (it never could be clearly stated how,) wove themselves into temporary unity and evolved that illusory but very convenient notion of self-identity. Baldly stated, this doctrine, which Hume initiated and which has commended itself to various leaders of modern scientific thought, notably to Huxley, appears so difficult of comprehension, and when grasped so innately absurd, that the plain man may be safely trusted to discard it. Impressions without a something impressed, a stream of consciousness self-deluded into the recognition of a one and undivided non-existent self, appear to the ordinary mind sheer absurdities.

The difficulty of understanding, and the

impossibility of classifying individual man, have played their part in helping to turn aside thought from looking upon him as of any great importance in solving historical, social and anthropological problems. It is much easier to study him in classes and masses, communities, nations and races. Psychology itself is occupied with generic rather than individual man. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise, for even in that analysis of consciousness which is one of the principal psychological methods, it is still always man as object who is under observation, *i.e.*, man as he can be known, not as he knows. This last knowledge is—in the sense in which we are now taking it,—only possible to each individual man for himself, and even by him not classifiable, intuitive not reasoned. Self-knowledge is impenetrable from without, incommunicable, in each case unique, consequently outside the range of Science, for whom the unique is inadmissible. This being the case it is no matter for surprise that she should assume for her own purposes that man as she knows him, social, psychological man, is man complete, and treat that inner individual

aspect which for ever eludes her as of little or no moment. For her own purposes she is justified in doing this, so long as she does not endeavour to impose her point of view as sufficient and satisfactory beyond her own sphere.

To attempt this would be to ignore what Science is pledged never to ignore, a great natural fact, to the recognition of which, as we have seen, all those biological processes which are one of her especial and most successful studies lead up. The increasing stress laid upon individuality, as we rise in the scale of organic life, denotes that in the economy of Nature the individual, however, partially understood, is of great and peculiar importance. It is customary to say that Nature ignores the individual, that she cares only for the good of the species, the improved type, and that to secure her end, holocausts of individuals are offered up. Tennyson saw farther than this:—

> "So careful of the type? But no!
> From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
> She cries, 'A thousand types are gone,
> I care for nothing, all shall go.'"

But "all" does not go; there remains from stage to stage an election, an election among

the "types," an election among the individuals that conform to the types. The "fittest" survive, and when that abstraction the "species" is brought down to concrete life, the "fittest," the inheritors at any given moment of all the treasures of evolution so far accumulated, are a certain number of *individuals*. It would therefore be quite as true, and often less misleading, to say that individuals rather than "types" are the special care of Nature.

There is, however, one fact undeniable till we come to man, viz., that the *raison d'être* of each individual existence apparently ceases at death. It seems confined to physical possibilities and to be exhausted by the demand made upon it in this visible course of things. Taking even the highest animals below man, we cannot reasonably assert that they show any sign of requiring for the complete fulfilment of their individuality a wider or a more spiritual environment than that of earth. With man, as we have seen, the case is different. So far from actual conditions exhausting his individuality, they rather seem insufficient to rouse its highest powers, or exhibit its full

scope. His conscious demand for himself and his fellows is more time; fewer physical disabilities and mental limitations; a wider sphere; a fuller experience, a larger life. And making ample allowance for the truth which Weismann has so prominently brought forward, that as things are, the short duration of life among the higher animals is racially good because the function of reproduction is thus reserved to those fittest to exercise it, and a more vigorous vitality passed on to the succeeding generations, we cannot but recognise that in the case of man this benefit is conferred at the cost of an individual loss, large out of all proportion to that incurred at any lower stage in the organic world. The possibilities of no human individual are exhausted at death, and the more highly trained, cultured, and intellectually or practically active his life has been, the more do we perceive that his capacity has been greater than his attainment. This fact is certainly no *proof* that his individual life does not terminate at death; but assuming (as in a future chapter the writer hopes to show we have a right to assume,) a scale of values in Nature, and

recognising that if such a scale exists, a premium is placed upon individuality, a *presumption* which we may justly call scientific is afforded that the individual man does not cease at death. If this be so, the result, so far as Science is concerned, upon the question of Immortality, would be the same as that in other cases of a scientific presumption. The suggestion would be accepted as a working hypothesis which a further accumulation and study of facts would either disprove or raise to the rank of an accepted theory.

Let us assume for the sake of argument merely that the latter alternative has occurred.[1] What would then be the position of Science with regard to the persistence of individual life after death? She would accept the fact as she accepts the fact of life after birth. She would note and classify the phenomena upon which her conviction is based. She would incidentally urge that conduct should be such as to sub-

[1] In the opinion of some it has occurred already; but scientific men as a body have certainly not yet reached so far as the working hypothesis stage, and in the opinion of the present writer never will, while they retain the presumption against *the possibility* of individual survival after death.

serve the interests (so far as from her point of view she is able to infer them,) of life beyond as well as of life before death. She would encourage research into that as into any other unknown, or partially known, region of investigation. She would endeavour to ascertain, if possible to produce experimentally, the conditions of such life, and in case of success we should doubtless have a body of scientific men devoted to this special study and with continually improving methods of pursuing it. How far this might be an advantage to mankind at large it is difficult to determine, but one thing is certain, the inner significance of individual human life would be as far from the ken of Science as ever. She would, indeed, be able to assert with even more confidence than she now too often denies its persistence after death, and this might produce a sobering and awe-inspiring effect on the thoughtful, but her material would still be the body, not the soul, of experience, and in presenting this new class of facts she would be as unable to give a complete and satisfying interpretation of them, as she is of the facts pertaining to

the life of man as she at present recognises it.

These remarks are made in no carping or fault-finding spirit, but to correct what seems to the writer a double misconception, viz., (1) that Science is justified in a presumption against the persistence of individual human life after death; and (2) that were the contrary proved, she would be in a position to give an entirely different interpretation of that life as a whole. The considerations which have occupied us in the present essay, show, on the contrary, that the true scientific presumption is rather for than against the persistence of individual life after death, and that in any case it is not within the province of Science to attempt a complete interpretation of the life of man, whether or not it persists after death in individual form. In this second statement we are only asserting that in the region of knowledge, as in that of practical life, there is a division of labour, that though Science can do much, she cannot do all, and that her efforts need to be supplemented by work of another kind, to which her own is indispensable but which it cannot supply.

The presence—we might say the omnipresence,—of individuality, not only in the organic world but in the known universe, might be illustrated in many ways. Man is only an extreme instance of that which is foreshadowed with ever-increasing clearness as his own status in the Natural Order is approached. That Order itself in its entirety bears the impress of individuality. It is not one of a class, it is unique. It is this —and not that. Each event occurs because the universe is what it is and not something else, and so complete is its individuality (technically called the Uniformity of Nature,) that even its possibilities—the things which may be or may not be—are limited to the kind of things which are in consonance with its characteristics as a whole.

One fundamental characteristic is the persistence of the same thing through manifold changes of form. What is known in physics as the Conservation of Energy is an illustration of this on a large scale. The technical definition of energy is capacity for work, and by its conservation is meant that in the transmutations which this capacity undergoes, being now potential, now kinetic,

appearing at one moment as mechanical motion, at another as heat, its sum remains the same. No "energy"—Science tells us—is ever lost. Yet this assertion needs to be qualified by another, viz., that in every transmutation some energy is "dissipated," *i.e.*, the exact equivalent does not reappear in usable form. It escapes, and though still in existence is, for practical purposes, whether these be cosmical processes or the ends of applied Science, wasted. The scientific significance of this fact is that the course of things, as we know it, must come to an end in time. The time may be (though so far as the solar system is concerned it appears possibly predicable within some millions of years,) immeasurable, but none the less it has a term; and when that term is reached the condition of the known universe will be what is best described as that of death. Its whole available energy will by then be degraded into heat of a low and absolutely uniform temperature, and the result will be absence of light, warmth and life. It should be remarked, however, that the shell—if we may so call it—of the cosmos will apparently remain. Science does not seem

able to predict what will become of the agglomerations of matter known to us as Stellar Systems. Apparently the law of gravitation will continue to hold, and dead worlds will revolve round dark suns in hopeless and impenetrable mystery. The death of the universe, if such be a true representation of it, is thus infinitely more desolate and unlovely than the death of organic forms. These at any rate by returning to their elements minister to the continuance and furtherance of life and beauty. Though they themselves perish, their dissolution is instinct with promise and service; but the dead Cosmos, so far as Science can speak, is devoid of promise and serves nothing. Perhaps this very fact, opposed as it is to all analogy with known cosmical processes during the ages of their duration, may point to the inference that scientific data are here insufficient for prediction, and that there may be, even from her own point of view, possibilities in the decay of the universe which she is not as yet in a position to suggest. However this may be, it is more important for our present purpose that we should return to our consideration of the

persistence of individual life through organic and super-organic changes.

A favourite analogy with those who believe in the persistence of human individuality after death, has been the life-history of insects, the metamorphoses they undergo strikingly exhibiting the possibility of the same physical individual passing into totally different conditions of life, yet retaining its identity. This is an obvious and a picturesque illustration, but it is not in reality so striking as that which has already been drawn from the life-history of the higher animals. The changes there exhibited are apparently more gradual; but they are as great, indeed greater than in the case of insects. There is more difference between the ovum of a vertebrate animal and the adult form of that animal, than there is for instance between the chrysalis and the butterfly. In one respect, however, the latter analogy offers a suggestion which is not found in the case of the higher vertebrates, though in that of reptiles it to some extent exists.[1] The fully-

[1] The reference, of course, is to the periodical casting of the skin, but the analogy is not so close or so striking as in the case of insects, which enter into actually new conditions of life. Reptiles remain in the same.

formed butterfly emerges from the chrysalis case and leaves the latter behind to be resolved into its elements, having no use for it in the new and higher phase of life which has begun. Assuming that the human individual enters at death into new conditions of life, this analogy may assist us to understand that he need not be thought of as bodiless, because the body which sufficed to his needs under the old conditions has been left to return to its elements and be transmuted through natural processes into other forms to subserve other uses. If we may so express it, it is not the body, but the body-building power possessed by all organisms, which is the important matter. Part of the individuality of all living beings consists in the unique way in which in every case the body-building power exhibits itself. In the same organic division the body is always built on the same plan, yet no two individuals have bodies which are identically the same. Even in the case of twins this is true. The difference lies in some subtle individual idiosyncrasy in the body-building power, which so far Science is unable to penetrate. The individuality of the body

becomes far more evident, however, as we rise in the organic scale, and is most evident in man. In him too for the first time the body-building power seems to fail in providing adequate expression for the being to which it is linked. The man is more, is capable of more, than owing to his physical limitations he is able to make clear to himself or to others. It is for this reason that we feel impelled to speak of them as limitations. The body of a bird or of any animal does not strike us as limiting its individuality, rather as expressing it in a most complete and appropriate manner. The individuality of many a human being, on the contrary, seems to be fighting its way to expression through bodily hindrances, rather than clothing itself in a suitable and controllable form.

It would be unwise to lay too much stress on such considerations as the above, yet they are worthy of notice. They are among the facts which it should be the part of Science to note and classify; the part of Philosophy and Religion to interpret. In the present chapter our concern is with the scientific aspect of the subject alone, and

enough has perhaps been said to show that individuality is one of the most salient characteristics of the universe, that it assumes a special importance in the organic region of that universe, and in man is incomparably stronger, fuller, and at the same time, so far as we are able to judge, less adequately expressed than in that of any other living being. Consequently the possibility in his case of its continuance after death deserves to be seriously confronted.

To do this we must have recourse to philosophical considerations, considerations, that is, which, while accepting all the conclusions of Science within her own province, that of Space and Time, decline to regard them as final, but seek to penetrate the inner significance of facts of which Science can only give an external interpretation.

From the scientific standpoint, then, all we can claim (apart from those facts adverted to at the commencement of this chapter, the reality of which is still under test and discussion,) is a presumption in favour of the persistence of human individual life after death. This presumption as we have seen, is founded on the prominent place of individu-

ality in Nature, and its presence in so high a degree in man that actual conditions are insufficient to give it scope.

One word may perhaps be added with reference to those alleged occurrences which if substantiated would, it is thought, place individual immortality beyond the pale of scientific doubt. If any reader will be at the pains seriously to question his personal friends and acquaintances, accepting only first-hand evidence, he will be surprised to find how numerous are the instances of *unsought* but apparently indubitable re-appearances of, or communications from, those who have died to those who are living. They are seldom spoken of, for two reasons, (1) that such experiences are usually held too sacred by their subjects to be freely communicated to others, and (2) that there exists so great a prejudice against their reality that sensible and healthy-minded persons (and the evidence of no others in these matters could be accepted,) shrink from laying themselves open to the almost certain accusation of an over-excitable imagination, a morbid mental or physical condition and the like. Consequently many occurrences

which at first sight might, as it seems, be exceedingly important from the scientific point of view, are either never mentioned at all, or are kept back till, owing to the length of time which has elapsed, and perhaps the death of the chief person concerned, they become unverifiable. This would be more regrettable than it is, were it not for the fact that save to this person, the one to whom the communication is made, it can never approve itself as reliable in the present state of scientific opinion. Experiences of the kind which the writer has in view are, if real and unsought, so absolutely impossible to reproduce and so personal in their character and import, that though to their subject they may be absolutely convincing, and, to those whose personal knowledge of him places his trustworthiness beyond doubt, highly interesting and suggestive, they, like some other individual experiences, are not matter for scientific investigation. The occurrences which do so lend themselves either are or tend to be reproducible under known conditions. Consequently, though as a rule they are infinitely more trivial than the unsought

experiences referred to, they are more valuable scientifically and more calculated to overcome prejudice.

But the true natural scale of values is not always the same as that of Science, and at a later stage of our enquiry it may appear that these strictly individual manifestations have a worth and significance not to be ignored or despised. In the meanwhile we may close with the remark that, save to the wilfully ignorant or prejudiced, the existence of telepathy, that is communication between human beings under present known conditions, without any traceable physical intervention, is an established fact. Assuming that human beings exist under other and unknown conditions, telepathy offers a means of communication with those living the present visible life which it would be almost impossible to suppose would never be used; and this is a reflection full of pregnant suggestion to those who do not regard the known as co-extensive with the existing universe.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PHILOSOPHIC STANDPOINT

We have now to approach the question of immortality from the philosophic standpoint. Our aim, accepting as correct the scientific presentation of natural facts, is to penetrate if possible their inner significance. But here, as ever, we must tread cautiously. As we saw in the previous chapter, there can be no reliable metaphysics without reliable physics, and under the latter head our knowledge is constantly growing, our mental standpoint shifting, old theories making way for new. This is all in the line of progress and development, but it means that the difficulties of interpretation are great. The last word of Science has not been said, never will be said while man continues to enquire and to learn; and so long as it has not been said the last word of philosophy cannot be said either. The

latter, moreover, covers an enormously wide field which we cannot here attempt even to delimit. Our efforts must be strictly circumscribed. Our aim is to arrive at the metaphysical significance with regard to man of certain recognised facts in the physical universe, to ascertain what relation they bear not to the scientific aspect of that universe, to space and time and the intellect of man, but to the Ground and Source of his being and of theirs. This is the work of that branch of metaphysics known as Religious Philosophy. To enter upon it as we are doing directly from scientific considerations, is to necessitate certain initial assumptions:—

(1) That the universe of being, as Science knows it, has a Ground and Source beyond itself, transcending therefore space and time;

(2) That the human mind is so constituted that it is able to some extent to apprehend this Ground and Source, consequently itself also partially to transcend space and time.

Under the second head we may remark that this capacity in man for transcending

space and time is a matter of common, everyday experience. Memory oversteps these limits; imagination does so; sympathy does so; abstract thought does so. The old man who "lives in the past," the young man who "lives in the future," the mother who lives in the lives of her (perhaps absent) children, the scholar or the mathematician who in abstruse study or calculation loses the sense of duration and of material surroundings, these each and all mentally transcend time and space. Physically they are bound—in mind they are free.

There is another and more fundamental illustration of the same truth. Man's power of blending his experience into a *whole* implies the power of partially transcending time. Were he indeed altogether limited by it, he could be conscious only of succession, one thing after another, one event after another, one experience after another; he could not unite all those events and experiences into one, and make of them "My life." That he can and does do so is evidence that though he cannot remove his life out of time he is yet greater than time, and not altogether under its com-

pulsion. Again that man can be conscious of a whole in history, in the history of his own race, and in that of the Cosmos, is due to the same time-transcending power. Similar remarks apply in their measure to space. That man can perceive not the mere fact of juxtaposition, but the blending of many juxtapositions into a whole, that space is to him *unifying*, shows that he bends it (mentally) to his own purposes. It is not his master. And for our present purpose it matters nothing how, through what stages of temporal development, man acquires this unifying peculiarity of his mental constitution. The central fact for Philosophy is that he possesses it: that whatever physical and psychological processes, discovered and classified by Science, have from her point of view brought about this result, the result is there and is significant.

A further important point to notice in the present connection is that in unifying we also distinguish, as is shown by our always setting our present life, the life which we are living at the moment, over against a larger and more comprehensive life, in which that moment is included, yet from

which it is distinct. We do this in four ways:—

(1) In regard of any present moment in our individual life, such moment standing out over against, yet as part of the whole into which the past, present and future of that individual life are combined;

(2) In regard of our whole individual life, as contrasted with the life of our social environment and the life of mankind in general;

(3) In regard of the life of mankind in general (of which our own is a constituent part), as contrasted with the whole cosmic process as we know it;

(4) In regard of that cosmic process itself, the whole visible temporal order of things (more or less crudely conceived according to the stage of intellectual culture and development attained,) as contrasted with an eternal, invisible order which conditions and transcends, while it includes, the temporal.

It is hardly necessary to observe that we

are not always giving attention to these contrasts. They are often outside the actual field of consciousness, lying as it were latent in our minds, yet ever there, ready at any moment to spring into full view, always more or less affecting, though it may be unconsciously, our mental attitude at any given moment. The very fact, so often insisted upon by ethical and religious teachers, of the transitory nature of all earthly experience, is only intelligible to them and to us because contrasted with a sense of abidingness equally present. We should not know that "the world passeth away," unless we were conscious that something, not the world, "abideth for ever."

The time-transcending capacity in man has been thus insisted upon, because the conception we form of our relation to time and to eternity must very largely affect our idea of individual human life. If we regard the latter as being now wholly subordinated to temporal conditions, we place an enormous difficulty in the way of any reasonable belief in its persistence after death, a difficulty which, were it real, would need to be candidly allowed and seriously confronted.

Since a little reflection shows us, on the contrary, that our time-limitation is but partial, this fact must equally be taken into account in our effort to probe the meaning of human individuality. To this effort we now address ourselves.

When considering the subject from the scientific point of view, we saw that though individuality is far more emphasised in man than elsewhere in Nature, yet it is characteristic not only of all organic beings but of the inorganic universe as well, that in fact the whole Cosmos bears the stamp of individuality, *i.e.*, of uniqueness. It is such that it is completely and definitely distinguished from all possible or conceivable other orders that might have come into existence. Its very possibilities are conditioned by the kind of universe which it is: they could not be otherwise unless it were otherwise. When, leaving the inorganic universe, we turn to organic life, we find that individuality tends to become what we may perhaps term increasingly spontaneous. Instead of being as it were stamped upon each organism, as a hall-mark upon silver, the organism appears rather to

develop its own individuality in its own way, strictly limited, of course, by the organic division to which it belongs, yet within these limits having so much of free play as to enable it (very markedly among the higher animals,) to develop certain idiosyncrasies of its own, difficult if not impossible to define, which yet distinguish it from all members of the same species. Among the higher animals at any rate there is the further power of each individual knowing itself to be such. A dog does not seem at all confused about his own individuality. How far down the scale of animal life this capacity extends it would be very difficult to say. Possibly it exists in a rudimentary form wherever there is sentiency, but it increases with the approach of self-consciousness, and reaches its culmination in man, in whom alone that consciousness is so fully developed as to confer upon him the dignity of personality. And here for the first time the full scope of individual being appears to dawn upon us. It is such that no other characteristic can obscure or diminish its reach, which on the contrary widens from the apparently superficial dis-

tinction between one stone and another, or one blade of grass and another, to include all the vast yet delicate differences between one human being and another of the same age, nationality, social status and culture. Individuality is not swamped in, but extraordinarily enhanced by personality. The importance of this fact in connection with our present subject becomes apparent when we recall the tendency of much modern philosophic thought to regard finite persons as evanescent manifestations of an Infinite Personality which at the same time transcends and includes them: in which they so entirely live and move and have their being, that they are to it as waves upon the surface of a boundless deep, momentarily appearing only to disappear again.

The recognition of self-conscious mind as the ground of nature is characteristic of that form of philosophy known as Idealism. Without going into an argument which to specialists would be superfluous, and to the general reader essentially tedious and difficult of comprehension, we may perhaps observe that it becomes increasingly hard to look upon any other ground as adequate. The

mind in its human manifestation appears late in the Natural Order, yet when it does appear, it takes precedence of all else. Men seem to be, are, in so far as they are ignorant, at the mercy of the laws of nature, yet they become by observation and experiment, capable by obedience of making these laws subserve their own purposes. Man who is physically but a "reed" is yet by virtue of his mental and spiritual powers the mightiest thing in the known universe. It may crush him physically, it often does, but it cannot make him cease to love, to know, to endure, to rise above all physical failure to undreamed-of spiritual heights. This alone would lead to the surmise that mind rather than body lies at the foundation of things, and conjoined to other considerations, such as the paradox of a universe present to no mind, entering into no experience, makes materialism very ineffectual as an explanation of what we perceive and know under actual conditions.

We have seen that even in man mind is able to some extent to transcend temporal limits. But man is finite, that is, partial: he is under restriction. Essential mind,

mind unlimited, mind apart from any finite manifestation of it, would be above all time-limitations; would be what we mean by eternal, infinite. Time and the temporal would be conditioned by it. It would be the ground of all being. This position is here accepted. In accepting it, however, we must be on our guard against the mistaken inference that universal mind is necessarily colourless, indifferent, characterless. In ascending through the conception of the finite to that of the Infinite, it has been a common error to do so by way of negation; to repeat the formula "The Infinite is *not*" this, that or the other, till we arrive at an abstraction of which nothing whatever can be said or thought. This *reductio ad absurdum* results from making the Infinite synonymous with the unconditioned. The term that really expresses our meaning is not unconditioned but *self-conditioned*, wholly conditioned from within. It is not possible for us to form any even approximately adequate conception of what such a mode of existence really is, but some faint forth-shadowing of it we have in our own experience. We are not altogether shaped by

external conditions; to some extent we shape them, and the more will-power or "character" we have, the more self-sufficing we are, and the more we create our own conditions.

This word "character" demands serious attention. We shall find on reflection that it is the chief expression of human individuality. Superficial acquaintanceship is, perforce, obliged to distinguish one man from another by differences in physiognomy and general appearance, tricks of manner, voice, gesture, etc. A very little more familiarity, however, stopping far short of intimacy, is needed in order to shift our sense of recognition away from traits of person to traits of mind and disposition; and real intimacy, whether it engender love or hatred, makes us increasingly feel that it is the traits of disposition, the character, which above all distinguish to us this particular man from his fellows. Physical peculiarities and intellectual attainments seem by comparison accidents; it is the character which is for us the man. And it is needless to observe that no two characters are identical. A man may be of the same age, social standing, culture, in-

tellectual attainment, physical strength as another; he may have had the same education, social environment, opportunities; he may belong to the same family; he may follow the same profession; and yet the character of each is clear-cut and distinguishable, and the work of each bears in consequence its own peculiar impress which differentiates it from that of the other.

The stamp of character upon work is a familiar but a very remarkable fact. Other things being equal, the more of it there is, the better we recognise the work to be; and the hall-mark of a work of genius is not excellence merely, but the supremely unique, or as we say "original," impress which distinguishes it. It is an individual product.

Now this as we have seen is a characteristic of the Cosmos; it, too, is an individual product, unique, original. If Science can do no more than state the fact in her own language and manner, as she does by insisting on the uniformity of Nature and the irrevocableness of natural law, it is open to Philosophy to go a step further, and to draw the simple but supremely significant inference, that what bears the impress of individuality

is indeed of individual origin, that the Ground and Source of the universe is not only Infinitely Personal, but Infinitely Individual. Here then we perceive the true place of individuality in the cosmic scale of Values. It reaches to the foundation of things. It enters into the ground of being. Its universal presence and its extraordinary enhancement when united with self-conscious mind receive thus their interpretation; and our enquiry into its significance as regards man receives this first answer: that if the Infinite Life from which all finite life is derived be Personal and Individual, infinitely Personal and infinitely Individual, then man, the most personal and the most individual of known beings, is marked out as in close and special touch with the Ground and Source of all existence. We have to examine the bearing of this fact on our immediate subject, Individual Immortality.

And first perhaps it will be wise to dwell a little more at length on that which gives to finite individuality all its worth and meaning, viz., the Infinite Individuality. In fixing our thoughts on the latter we must dissociate from it all idea of limitation. Even in the

case of our fellow-men we feel that their individuality is an assertive thing. It has force and power, it declares to us what they are; it makes us know them. The loss of individuality, either in ourselves or in others, means the loss of all which makes recognition possible. And though in us and in them alike it involves limitation, that is only because of our finitude. It is not as individuals but as *finite* individuals that we are limited, even as it is not as knowers or as lovers but as *finite* knowers and lovers that our knowledge and love have bounds. Infinite Individuality is not limited, but is possessed of all the resources of Infinitude whereby to assert and make itself known. It is, if we may venture to try and express what is by the nature of the case beyond expression, that whereby Infinite Personality is revealed, even as finite individuality is that by which finite personality is revealed. The two, so far as we know, are inseparable. Our own experience teaches us that they are inseparable in ourselves. Reflection upon the universe of being, as Science shows it to us, teaches us that they are inseparable in the Source and Ground of that universe,

known to us in the language of religion as God.

What we have to claim for individuality then is, that it enters into the meaning of the universe, that it is in fact part of that meaning, and as such eternal, indestructible, even as God, for and to Whom it exists, is eternal and indestructible. For when we speak of the meaning of the Universe, we intend not what man from his limited point of view can see of its meaning, but its true and real significance, apprehended with clear and all-including vision. No finite understanding is capable of such a grasp. Infinite meaning is for the Infinite alone. Yet when in a finite being self-consciousness attains such development as in man, there arises a capability of appreciating some part of the Infinite meaning, the part which concerns and is involved in that special type of being—human being. This capability increases with the growth of intellect and spiritual insight, the former slowly delineating and interpreting the body, and the latter, with the aid of the former, the soul of human knowledge and experience. Thus hesitatingly, but with continually increasing approximation to truth,

men learn to "think the thoughts of God after Him," entering as they do so a little way into that Holy of Holies, the Divine Individuality, which is expressed in the external Universe they laboriously study, and still more in themselves who study it. For to be able to think the thoughts of God after Him, slowly and blunderingly though it be, implies to some extent a community of nature between the Divine and the human, just as the power of even partially transcending the temporal implies being so far in touch with the eternal. That man can spell out something of the meaning of the cosmos implies that his own individuality is not alien to the Divine Individuality, that the Word is "very nigh him," even when he is unconscious of it, that as deep answereth unto deep, so the secret recesses of his being are in touch with the Divine Being. What worth and significance does such a reflection bestow on each man's individuality! what responsibility it lays upon him to respect, develop and maintain it, both in himself and in others!

We have already seen that as life rises in the organic scale, individuality is not only more marked, but becomes increasingly spontaneous.

In man this spontaneity is united to a highly developed self-consciousness; and he recognises himself through the many and great vicissitudes of life as always the same individual. The whole meaning of his life to himself is bound up with this recognition; and when he raises his thoughts and aspirations to the Author of his being, the whole meaning also of that most intimate and solemn relationship hangs upon his realisation that closely as his life is interwoven with the life of his fellows—

> ". . . this Atom cannot in the Whole
> Forget itself, it aches a separate soul,"

or, as Browning expresses it—

> "God is, thou art, the rest is hurled
> To nothingness for thee."

This supreme meaning of individuality to man, that he himself and not another alone occupies or can occupy the one special relationship of his "lone soul" to God, is very deeply rooted in his consciousness, though he is often far indeed from willingly harbouring it. Where for any reason the "love which casteth out fear" is not present or is obscured, man's impulse is to merge the individuality of his religion in that of

the crowd, or else to put someone or something between him and the Being whom he would shun. Under favourable circumstances it is possible for him to succeed in stifling the too-insistent voice of his individuality, but it cannot be slain. The merest accident will re-awaken it. A touch, a memory, is sufficient; the adventitious surroundings in which he has thought to hide himself drop away, and once more he feels that though

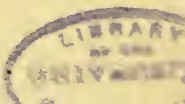
> "Man lumps his kind i' the mass, God singles thence,
> Unit by Unit."

It is because each man's individuality has a meaning not only to himself but to God that he cannot escape from it, that even when he would ignore or merge it, it asserts itself again, piercing him through and through as with a sword of the Spirit.

It is worth while to pause upon this statement that each man's individuality bears to God its own special meaning. At first sight the tremendous issues involved in it do not clearly appear. Since, as we have already said, the whole Cosmos is individual, and is the complete expression of and fulfilment to the Infinite God of His meaning in bringing

it into being, each part of course enters into that meaning—man with the rest. Why, therefore, should any peculiar significance be attached to the individuality of man?

The considerations already brought forward are an answer to this question. Man alone is a personal, and by consequence, an ethical individual, able as such to enter into conscious relationship with the Author of his being. The sub-organic universe, the lower organic world, express indeed God's meaning to Him, but it is unknowingly. Man, with his insatiable intellect, his unconquerable activity, his "divine discontent" with present attainment and constant reaching forth after something more excellent, is on a different plane of being. If we may venture so to word it, his individuality cannot mean so much to himself without meaning much also to God. Man can respond to the Divine intention: he can to some extent consciously and voluntarily express the Divine meaning. Without this co-operation on his part it is indeed not fully realised. To use a familiar word, each man is *responsible* for the working out of his own ethical individuality. Its possibilities are not



of his making: for good or for evil these originally are beyond his control. But the actualising of the possibilities lies largely within it, and any fair survey of history, or of our own and (so far as we can enter into it) of others' experience, confirms this statement. At the same time, as has repeatedly been pointed out, the visible course of things, life as we know it, does not give full scope for the working out of individuality, ethical or intellectual. No man, now and here, completely or even with approximate completeness, attains the measure of his capabilities. He is restrained, limited, as it seems to us hampered on all sides. And even in those rare and fortunate instances where no other restriction exists, there is that of the shortness of life. If nothing else, then more time is needed for the fulfilment of individuality.

From our present point of view it will be understood that man need not fear the lack of time. Individuality, though manifested in, is not a consequence of the Temporal Order, but belongs to the Eternal; and a being who is, to the extent that man is, consciously individual, capable of an ethical relationship to God and to his fellows, could not lapse

from that consciousness without some part of the Eternal Meaning lapsing with him. The loss of his conscious individuality would be a loss to the Divine completeness of experience, for in virtue of it he holds towards God a unique ethical place, his own place, which he only can fill. Whatever, therefore, death may involve, it cannot involve such a loss as this. From the philosophic standpoint, indeed, death is of peculiarly small significance, a mere accident of the temporal order, with which alone it has any concern. It cannot frustrate or interrupt the eternal meaning; and in man that meaning is bound up with his consciousness of himself and of God, with his individual personality, in fact.

The question regarding individual immortality is thus, from the philosophic standpoint, affirmatively answered. It is involved in and subsidiary to the larger question of the worth of individuality itself, when manifested in human form, and, as we have seen, that worth is beyond human calculation, because much as each man's individuality means to himself it means yet more to God. It is derived from Him, it is sustained in Him, it is the reflex of His own Infinitude

and partakes of His Eternity. Each finite personal being is to God a unique ethical individual, the one in all creation who can hold just this relationship to the Father of his spirit. If he fails, there is no other who can be to God just what he is. So much of the ethical meaning of the Universe has failed with him. Regarded in this light, it seems absurd to look on death as even a possible term to individual ethical life. It is not ethical failure. There is a shadow which looms far more darkly, the significance of which it would be idle to pretend to underrate and from which to our limited vision death gains a fictitious importance — the shadow of moral evil. Here indeed there seems to lie the dread possibility of a unique Divine Ideal being frustrated, of complete and irretrievable ethical failure.

It is not possible, in a few short sentences, even to touch on so vast and difficult a problem as this. Mention is made of it simply to intimate that it is not left out of sight, and that our next effort must be to discern its true proportions and indicate the place it holds in the universe of being, and especially of human being.

With one further observation, the present chapter must be brought to a close. Granting all that has been said of the worth of each human individual as a unique ethical being, and as a corollary his persistence after death, how are we to account for his having had a beginning? That which begins, must, it would seem, also end. It belongs to the temporal order, not to the eternal, in which there is neither beginning nor end.

The answer to this difficulty must be found in a twofold recognition:—

(1) That in so far as it is subjected to actual earthly conditions, the life of man is temporal and belongs to the temporal order. Birth and death are facts of that order. Physically, man has a beginning and an end; but we have seen already that even under actual limitations he can and does to some extent transcend both the temporal and spatial, *i.e.*, physical, limits, and on his capability of so doing depends his human—as distinguished from his animal—individuality.

(2) And if the supreme worth of that human individuality be allowed, if

it bears a unique and consequently eternal ethical significance to God, we must also grant that it neither began with birth nor ends at death. That man should not, while restricted to earthly conditions, be conscious of the eternity of his being, is not difficult to understand. It is obscured to him by the temporal limitations characteristic of those conditions, and which, it may well be, are to some extent projected beyond death. If, however, the considerations already advanced be valid, temporal limitations must ultimately cease for every human individual, and when they do so, his eternal experience will stand out to him in a clear and perfect whole, the manner of perceiving which is feebly and faintly foreshadowed in his actual power of regarding the past, present and future of his earthly experience as one life.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE ETHICAL INDIVIDUAL AND IMMORTALITY

It is a familiar but significant fact that in every region of knowledge one fact involves another, one truth another, one aspect of experience or thought another. An isolated fact or truth does not exist. It is always bound by close and often unsuspected ties to other facts and other truths. Nor is this the case within the scope of any specified region of knowledge alone. Every branch of science trenches at some point or other on the subject-matter of other branches,—the fundamental scientific assumptions demand and stimulate philosophic investigation: science and philosophy both bear in manifold and important ways on practical life and thought. Thus to the human intellect, the known universe in all its aspects inevitably comes to bear the marks of a vast and systematic whole, in which

every fact and every truth has its own essential place and function. Our present subject is an illustration in point.

Having in previous chapters indicated the importance of individuality in the Natural Order, its fundamental significance when conjoined with personality, the unique meaning of each ethical individual to God as well as to himself, and the consequent loss to the Eternal Meaning if one such individual were to lapse from conscious being, we saw that to regard the physical accident of death as an even possible term to ethical individuality appears a manifest absurdity. But in this very recognition, another and darker possibility confronted us: What of ethical failure itself? This we seem to see on all sides of us. How does it affect the worth and significance of ethical individuality?

The answer to this question must obviously depend on what ethical failure really is, and before going further it will be well to ascertain and define this, bearing in mind that in dealing with so vast a subject, within the present short compass, it is not possible even to indicate all its aspects, and

that our considerations must be limited to such as bear on the immediate point at issue.

In the world of practical life ethical failure means primarily failure to fulfil a specified social relationship. Thus a parent who does not fulfil the duties of a parent, a citizen who transgresses the laws of the state, a friend who is false to the claims of friendship, a trader who deliberately breaks the terms of his contract, each and all so far ethically fail. It will be observed, moreover, that the failure, in each case, is failure to reach a certain ideal standard of conduct shaped according to the relationship to be maintained. It is notorious that such standards differ from age to age and from country to country, being dependent on intellectual culture, religious belief, national custom, and many other variables. Consequently the self-same conduct in any given relationship might be regarded as ethical failure in one individual and success in another. Nevertheless, the falling short of some ideal standard, partially independent of the individual, but which it is supposed that he "ought" to recognise, is always the chief

element in ethical failure. This recognition by each individual of a standard by which his conduct is to be tested is universal. Even the proverbial thief has his standard of honour. The standard varies however, not only with circumstances and social environment, as has already been noted, but also from individual to individual, even when every external circumstance and every social condition is similar. The result is that each individual is to a certain extent his own judge. To himself as well as to an external authority, "he standeth or falleth," and should it so happen that the external authority is satisfied, but that he falls short of his own inward standard, he accounts himself to have failed. Reflection on this multiplicity and variableness of ethical standards, individual and social, on their evident importance and equally evident want of stability naturally leads to the enquiry: What is their meaning? How are they to be reconciled? Is there no ultimate standard of ethical failure and success.

These questions have often been put, and have received various answers. That which will here be suggested, is led up to by

former considerations, and is in pursuance of the same line of thought.

We have seen that each human individual holds towards the Father of his spirit, and of all spirits a unique ethical position, is to Him that which no other can be. From this eternal relationship temporal relationships derive their meaning and value. So much all readers who have thus far followed and approved the argument of the present volume, will be willing to grant. Real ethical failure (if it be indeed possible,) is failure in this eternal relationship of the individual to God. We say "real failure" because a man may seem to fail when viewed from the temporal standpoint, and yet not be failing when viewed from the eternal standpoint. Something in the same way we may regard his earthly life, as at this and this point an ethical failure, and nevertheless see that as a whole it is an ethical success. Things viewed *sub specie aeternitatis* are always viewed as wholes, and therefore an individual ethical life, as a whole, is viewed from and can only be truly judged by the Eternal. The test of real ethical success or failure is therefore, as we

have seen, fulfilment of that ideal relationship to God which is God's intention in its existence, and which is not subordinated to temporal conditions.

Can then a Divine, an eternal intention be frustrated, an eternal Ideal be lost, the completeness of eternal experience be curtailed, as it must be if even one of those unique relationships which ethical individuals should fulfil, is a failure? These questions are the form under which, from our point of view, the "Problem of Evil" must be faced and investigated.

And first there appears a certain begging of the question in presupposing that moral evil means ethical failure, that it is in opposition to the Divine intention and "ought not" to exist. So far there is no reason in anything that has been said, to justify the assumption that what we call evil is alien to the constitution of things, that it is not an intrinsic part of the ground of being, does not, in fact, hold a place in God Himself. If that be so, there is no "ought not" in the case. Evil is simply one aspect of the Divine Individuality, and as such has as much right to be expressed in the universe as "Good."

As a matter of fact, in the scientific view of Nature there is no such thing as moral good and evil. There is the fitness or unfitness of organic beings to perform certain functions whereby their own physical welfare and the perpetuation of their kind is secured.

In the case of man, there gradually results from the due performance of these functions a highly complex social organisation which, advantageous to intellectual progress and culture and to the development of the artistic and æsthetic faculties, is encumbered with its own difficulties and drawbacks, and entails its own peculiar sufferings, so that if limited to the earthly horizon, (as the view of Science perforce must be,) it is difficult to say whether even the greatest of civilisations is really worth all the effort and sacrifice by which it has been attained.

As we have seen, however, there are but few minds able to rest in that external interpretation of experience which is all that Science can afford. It seems an inevitable consequence of the mental constitution of man that he should believe the universe has a meaning which he can to some extent penetrate, and owing to this conviction moral

evil appears as a "problem" which must certainly have a solution even though its discovery should for ever baffle the best efforts of the human intellect.

There is, of course, the pessimistic manner of cutting the Gordian Knot. We can accept evil as the eternal ruling principle of the universe when every manifestation of it would be a necessary consequence of its place at the heart of things. There would then, however, arise the problem of good. We should have to face the question why there should be any "milk of human kindness," any unselfish love, any disinterested devotion to high intellectual or social aims, and, most of all, why we should attach any blame to ourselves if we fall short of an ideal standard of "right" either external or internal.

In truth this difficulty must be widely recognised, for there are very few out-and-out pessimists, people whose conscious and assured conviction it is that there exists a "stream of tendency not ourselves making for" evil, and no counterbalancing tendency "making for righteousness." The thinkers among us are mostly more daunted by the apparent capriciousness of the adjustment

between the two tendencies, than by the presence or absence of either one. The perplexing conclusion of human experience is that when man would do good, evil is present with him: and when he would do evil, good is present with him, for the bad man as often stays from completing a course of conduct which would be "no more than we should expect," as the good man yields to a temptation we should have supposed abhorrent to him.

So far then it would seem that good and evil are both root-principles of the universe, that, as was suggested above, both are expressions of the Divine Individuality. Such a conclusion, apart from its repugnance, leaves unaccounted for the existence of the feeling of duty—the "ought." Why does a man feel that he "ought" to pursue whatever course of conduct judged by his recognised standard (be the latter low or high) of right and wrong, is right, and never what is "wrong." He may wish and intend the latter, or not wishing and intending, may nevertheless follow it because "the temptation was so strong" that he "could not help" yielding; but never—if he is true to himself—will he

aver that he did wrong because he felt he ought. "I *must* yield though I ought *not*," is the language of his inner experience when about to succumb. We may, for our present purpose neglect the explanations of Science as to the processes through which this sense of "ought" has arisen. They are highly instructive and important in their own place. But the mind of man cannot rest in processes. It recognises that results are at least equally important, and that the meaning of results, if it can be arrived at, is the light in which processes can be best understood. The question for philosophy is therefore not how the sense of moral obligation was evolved, but why it is now, and has been within historical times in existence, why social progress and well-being should depend on its active acceptance, why good so far as it is recognised is invariably felt to be that which "ought" to prevail whether or not it actually does so.

On the interpretation of the universe which we have accepted, the ultimate reason of its being what it is, as a whole and in all its parts, lies in the Divine Individuality being what it is. The universe which is the

outcome of the Divine Activity, bears the impress of the Divine Character, so that if finite spiritual beings recognise moral obligation, that is because it is recognised by the Infinite Spiritual Being of whom they are the offspring. It may seem at first sight as though the existence even of moral obligation in the Divine Nature were a limitation of its Infinitude. But this is not so. Involuntary restriction of whatever kind is indeed a note of the finite, but not that which is wholly voluntary, which is laid by Infinite Will on Infinite Activity. In the case of moral obligation, the supposed limitation is a result of Infinite Knowledge and Infinite Holiness. All the possibilities of good and evil being eternally present to God, good is eternally chosen, recognised as what ought to be, and evil eternally rejected, recognised as what ought not to be. In Biblical language God "knows good and evil," but at the same time "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

This admission—that evil is present to the Divine Consciousness though only to be loathed and rejected, for ever prohibits the identification of goodness in the sense of

righteousness or holiness with mere innocence, *i.e.*, ignorance of evil. An intrinsic part of goodness lies in the *rejection* of evil. It is the fundamental characteristic of goodness in the universe which is the expression of the Divine Will and Activity, and must consequently be the conscious characteristic of goodness in every personal individual. Such an one cannot fill his own place to the Father of his spirit unless he chooses good and rejects evil. This is part of the Divine Ideal for him, of the Divine Intention in his existence; and the deliberate, conscious choice of good and rejection of evil is the ultimate test of ethical success and failure. It is the eternal standard of right and wrong.

This explains to us how in the world of human experience there comes to be such a multiplicity and variety of standards. The uniqueness which is characteristic of the whole universe of being, and which is so extraordinarily enhanced by personality, reaches its highest known degree in man whether we regard him collectively in tribes, classes, and nations, or individually each man by himself. The ultimate Standard—the consistent choice of good and rejection

of evil, is the same for all, but it is one of inexhaustible applicability, it adapts itself to every phase of human life and culture, to every different nationality, to every different age, to every rank in society, to every peculiarity of individual mental and spiritual constitution. Its demands are not uniformity of apprehension, but the determined and persistent endeavour to attain to what is apprehended. In words that are almost tritely familiar, it requires of each man that he shall live up to the highest he perceives, and it may safely be asserted that in no two human individuals is that highest identically the same. This in no way derogates from the obvious fact to which reference has already been made above, that there exist collective as well as individual ideals. We all recognise the existence of ethical ideals shared in by whole bodies of human beings. But our immediate concern is with the individual, and largely as each man's ethical standard is affected, in many instances actually inspired by that of his social environment, it nevertheless remains true in every case that there is an adaptation to individual idiosyncrasies which is unique. Moreover, in ethical

as in religious reform, the initiative is given by individuals. The way has to be prepared, indeed, by a growing though vague popular sense of the inadequacy of accepted standards and ideals; but the new start is almost invariably made by one man possessed of insufficient insight to perceive not only what ought not, but what ought to be, and sufficient character and self-devotion to give the requisite impulse in the right direction.

We are now in a position to consider the import to each individual man: (1) of the fact that he recognises an ethical standard of his own to which he may be true or false, and (2) of the existence of a unique Divine Ideal of his Individuality.

In the first place it must be acknowledged that no man is originally responsible for his ethical standard. He does not himself choose the age, nation, social rank into which he is born, nor the ancestral influences which the laws of heredity so strongly bring to bear upon him. Yet he is not wholly bound by any of these things, as the written history of earth's recognised greatest men abundantly shows, and the unwritten history of countless numbers, whose record is in the heart and

lives they have influenced through the power of their own individuality. The internal and external conditions of a man's life, as through childhood, youth, and manhood he gradually becomes aware of them, are the raw material out of which he fashions his individuality. Its possibilities, whether great or small, are limited; but they exist, and the realisation of some among them inevitably precludes the realisation of others. Man participates in the Divine prerogative of self-limitation, and the aim which he sets before himself, the ideal, bad or good, towards which he strives, is the result of its exercise. He determines to realise certain possibilities and renounce others. For this determination, from the ethical point of view, he is responsible in the degree to which he understands, or could, if he chose, understand, whether it is in consonance with and in furtherance of, not what he wishes to be, but what he recognises ought to be. If his determination leads him consistently to reject what he recognises as evil, and follow what he recognises as good, he is, however unconsciously, fulfilling the ethical purpose of his existence.

Here, however, we are brought face to

face with one of the greatest practical and theoretical perplexities of human life, one which seems hopelessly to confound all attempts to disentangle its intricate mesh. It is that to our eyes such fatal mistakes are often made by those who, according to what is said above, *are* fulfilling the Divine ethical demand on them, in whom the sense of moral obligation is most profound and most faithfully obeyed. It is not necessary to insist on this fact. There is no one who has not witnessed, too often experienced, heartrending proofs of its truth — and the tear-stained and blood-stained pages of history are as indelible a record of the errors and injustices of the good, as of the deliberate cruelties and greed of the bad. What are we to say of these things? If individual human life is limited to earth, they spell ethical failure for all those men and women who err from conscientious motives, failure not only for themselves, but for the multitudes they lead astray. Error, even when recognised, is mostly irretrievable on earth. But what if human life be not limited to earth? If each one of these men and women who have seemed to do harm where they

intended good, lives on after death rich with the experience so hardly won under earthly conditions? The case is altered then for themselves and for their kind. From the eternal standpoint by which alone immortal spiritual beings can be judged, these mistaken ones and their victims are not failures. Amid temporal confusion and temporal error, they are but working out the true meaning of duty, the significance of moral obligation and ethical individuality, learning as all learners in all schools must, how not, as well as how, to do it. If indeed "Man has forever," we need not too greatly regret, even in ethical matters, that, owing to the blindnesss and ignorance of earthly conditions, it happens often that—

> "This high man with a great thing to pursue,
> Dies ere he knows it";

or, again, that this other—

> "aiming at a million,
> Misses a unit."

It is the high aim, the highest which the degree of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment admits of, consistently and faithfully pursued, that is of importance from the

eternal standpoint. Men judge their fellow-men by what they do, and no other test is for them possible. But the judgment of God is based on other and deeper knowledge, and in the Divine sight, the seeming temporal failure may be a factor in the eternal victory.

Caution is needed, however, in accepting this truth, for it may easily be distorted into mischievous falsehood. The temporal ethical failure which may issue in eternal victory is not deliberate, nor the result of *wilful* ignorance. It is that which the conditions of actual human life render inevitable, even to the single-hearted followers of Good. There have been religious persecutors, for instance, who acted from the highest motives, and in the genuine belief that they were taking the only means "to save souls." There have been others who used this pretence to cloak private greed, revenge, or ambition; or who, recognising that the means used were unjustifiable, yet allowed themselves, through indifference or fear, to be overcome by counsels which they should have withstood. If individual immortality be a fact, and in this life at all costs good has

been followed, then, even though his best efforts have fallen short and his feet have stumbled on the path, the individual has not in the life beyond death to alter his fundamental aim or seek a fresh ideal. He has but to pursue, unweighted by earthly conditions, and with a deeper, wider apprehension of his meaning, the goal towards which his face has steadfastly been set before. But if good has been rejected, or wilful ignorance has called evil good, and good evil, the case is very different. Then the aim and ideal of the individual, his whole ethical attitude must be changed before he can begin to perceive or to fulfil the purpose of God in his existence. It is hardly conceivable, and against all experience of similar changes under known conditions, that so radical a transformation could take place without suffering. Most certainly it would require voluntary effort and co-operation on the part of the individual concerned, for the very essence of ethical victory, as well as the test by which ethical individuals are judged, is the deliberate rejection of evil and adhesion to good. That evil once accepted becomes more and more dominant, experience teaches us but too

clearly; and often the individual thus enslaved hugs his chains, not even desiring that they should be struck off. Against his will it is not possible, if he is ever to fulfil his relationship to the Father of his spirit, for that depends on the voluntary rejection of evil and the persistent choice of good. Yet, even for such an one, life beyond death holds hope, the hope that under other conditions, through other experience, the awakening may come, evil be renounced and good chosen.

To dogmatise on a subject of such profound difficulty as this, would be the height of presumptuous folly, but it is one to which the individual mind turns and turns again, and if there are directions in which we may look for light, it would be mere indolent cowardice to close our eyes to them.

In the first place it is necessary to remember that in the region of ethics, possibility and impossibility bear a different meaning to that which is familiar in the physical region. When we say that water "cannot" flow upwards, or that motion "cannot" be destroyed, we mean that such possibilities as these do not enter into the con-

stitution of the physical universe. They are not even potentially realisable. But when we say of a man of whose integrity and uprightness we are fully assured, that he "cannot" commit an immoral action, we do not mean that he is restrained from it by any physical necessity, or that such actions are potentially unrealisable. We mean that a man of his character and probity never will make such conduct actual, though there is nothing in the constitution of the universe to prevent it. The bad action might be, but will not be. Something in the man's own individuality prevents it. It is possible, but not possible *to him*, because he will not have it so.

All moral "impossibilities" are of this nature. Things that might be, but will not be, because deliberately prevented, and in the same manner all moral "possibilities" are things that may be, but need not be, because their realisation is voluntary.

It is to the region of moral possibilities that the realisation of the Divine Ideal for each ethical individual belongs. It is of its very essence that the realisation in every case should be voluntary. The Divine Inten-

tion is that each finite spirit should attain some unique moral victory, should represent to God triumphant goodness under certain special, limited and unrepeatable conditions. Therefore, victory is not necessitated, and defeat is possible. Possible, because otherwise there could not be victory; but in no case determined, because defeat does not enter into the Divine Ideal of any man.

The second consideration we must take into account is that the Divine Ideal is eternal. In our thoughts about its ultimate meaning, therefore, we must endeavour to rid ourselves of the notion that it had a beginning either with the man's earthly life, or at some infinitely remote period of time "before the world was," and that in the same manner its attainment lies either in the near or the far future. God's Ideals *are*, we cannot say of them that they were or that they will be, for past and future are shadows cast by our finitude. To the Infinite One they do not exist. When, therefore, we speak of the "attainment" of the Divine Ideal by any individual man, we speak of it from the temporal standpoint, from our own human and finite point

of view; and from this, as we have already seen, non-attainment is unquestionably possible for *all time*, and time is not confined to this life. There may be (we dare not commit ourselves to assert in any case that for all time there *is*,) ethical failure. Here and now we know it exists; here and now we see not only unavoidable errors and shortcomings, but evil brought about by preventable ignorance, culpable weakness or cowardice, even frequently by actual deliberate, persistent choice. Physical death puts no term to these things. It has nothing to do with ethical individuals as such. It can make no change in *them*, though through it they pass to different conditions of existence. If then, they leave this life deliberately choosing evil, they enter the life beyond death deliberately choosing evil, weighted as they need not have been, crushed under disabilities which they have created themselves. What revelations await them in that other, but still temporal life, what further means the just and merciful God may employ to bring them to a sense of what they are losing, to rouse in them the consciousness of their

guilt and shame, and the desire to turn from evil to good, it is not for us to conjecture. According to the Christian Revelation, and may we not say according to human recognition of what is befitting for immortal spirits who have thus despised their birthright, it is through intense suffering, "as through fire." But there is still an indestructible hope. The Eternal Ideal remains: while the individual is sinning, suffering, failing, choosing evil, resisting good, what God intends in him is present to God, and utterly lost though he be temporally, there is still the possibility, the eternal possibility, of his eyes being opened to the meaning of that temporal experience from which till it has wrought its work he can never escape.

If this Divine Ideal of every man is the one ground of hope for those who are otherwise the lost, it is the pledge and certainty of fulfilment for those who in spite of all darkness, ignorance, and infirmity strive towards the highest they perceive. Such as these leave this life and enter upon the life beyond choosing good. To them a more open vision, a larger entrance into

their Divine birthright is possible; to them, if we believe in their immortality we cannot doubt, and the Christian Revelation expressly asserts, that it is given. They are on the road that leads from attainment to attainment, from glory to glory, till they can bear to see the temporal fade away altogether, and the eternal alone remain. And while they are still struggling, often agonising in their earthly conflict, conscious of their shortcomings and their ignorance, of their half-voluntary lapses from the true path, fearing, at times suffering defeat, can there be a stronger source of comfort than the knowledge that the ideal of their individuality, so bruised and maimed at their own hands, is to God unchanged and unchangeable, awaiting "eternal in the heavens," their conscious attainment to and appropriation of it? It matters little in what words or under what imagery they picture that ideal to themselves. The keenest spiritual and intellectual insight must still fall short of the reality; the most ignorant and uncultured conception, if embodying however crudely the victory of good over evil, contains something of the truth.

The outcome of our considerations seems to be then that spiritual death, the lapsing of a Divine Ideal is, by the very nature of that Ideal possible *in time, i.e.,* from the finite point of view and in finite experience, and further that (since evil has no place in the eternal, being eternally repudiated by the Divine Will,) for no spirit persistently choosing evil and rejecting good can time end. There is no release and no remedy, save in the unique unchangeable relationship which each finite individual ideally bears to God, and which no temporal lapse can obscure to Him.

And since through all time this relationship, the very reason and condition of individual existence, has power to redeem and restore the lost spirit if the latter commence ever so feebly to repudiate evil and choose good, eternal hope is a reality for all, whether in this life or in the life beyond death. More or less than this we dare not say.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT AND THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

We have in the preceding chapters considered the subject of Individual Immortality from three points of view, the Scientific, the Philosophic, and the Ethical. We saw that at the stage Science has now reached, she can neither affirm nor deny the persistence of individual human life beyond death. We noticed, however, as bearing on the question, the increasing stress laid upon individuality as we pass from the inorganic to the organic divisions of Nature, and upwards through the many stages of the latter to man. In him it is far more pronounced than at any lower point in the scale of life, and he, moreover, appears straitened in his environment, and hampered by limitations of which he is conscious, inward limitations, so that during his short space of earthly life, he never reaches the true zenith of his individuality.

From the philosophic standpoint we endeavoured to see what the extraordinary enhancement of individuality when conjoined with personality might mean, and we were led to conclude that it was the result of finite personal individuals having their origin in, and being closely bound to an Infinitely Personal and Infinitely Individual Divine Being, to whom each one stood in unique ethical relationship. Physical death could not, we perceived, break this relationship, being a mere accident of the temporal order; but it appeared that there might be ethical failure, and this would be true death, spiritual death.

In our considerations from the ethical standpoint, we found that since deliberate and persistent rejection of evil and choice of good was necessary, in order that the unique relationship of the ethical individual to God should be maintained, there could not be compulsion to choose good. Consequently there might be for all time instances of complete ethical failure, *i.e.*, total lapses of Divine Ideals from the temporal and finite point of view. But since Divine Ideals are in essence eternal, the Divine Ideal of each individual into which ethical

defeat does not enter, is ever present to God, and in this fact there is eternal hope for all.

We now have to pursue our investigations from the Christian standpoint, to enquire (1) what was the teaching of Christ respecting Individual Immortality, (2) what the Ideal of Immortality which His immediate disciples founded upon that teaching, and further, (3) whether it is sufficiently comprehensive to respond to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual needs and aspirations of all human individuals. In these considerations it is assumed that Christ is regarded as revealing God and the things of God to man, so far as man can apprehend them. We cannot step aside from our main purpose to enter upon controversy, and it is therefore taken here for granted that Christ spoke of what He knew.

1. In the first place we may observe that throughout the Gospels human individuality is most markedly respected. Men are not "lumped in the mass," but "singled out unit by unit." Our Lord calls each follower by name, shows that He distinguishes the character of each, blames or approves each separately, allows His discourses to be inter-

rupted in order that He may reply to individual questions, or remove individual difficulties, tells His disciples that not even a sparrow[1] falls to the ground without their Father, and that they individually are of more value than many sparrows, that even the hairs of their heads are all numbered.

In the epistles this teaching is carried on and developed. St Paul recounts and lays stress on individual experiences, and repeatedly reminds his converts of their individual responsibilities, on account of which he forbids harsh judgments, for "who art thou that judgest the servant of another? To his own lord he standeth or falleth";[2] pleads for the runaway slave as his own son. St James tells his hearers that rich and poor do not exist to God, that it is the individual man, whatever his social status, for whom He cares.[3] St John insists on the need of love for the individual brother whom we have seen, if indeed we love the Father whom we have not seen.[4] According to New Testament records, there is no doubt that both by Christ and His disciples, the

[1] Matt. x. 29; Luke xii. 6, 9.
[2] Rom. xiv. 4.
[3] James ii. 1-10.
[4] 2 John iv. 20.

value in God's sight of individuals as such is not only recognised, but insisted on.

When, therefore, we turn to the special teaching of Christ on Immortality, we find it clearly and forcibly expressed as *Individual*. The parable of Dives and Lazarus, whatever else it may import, unmistakably asserts their individual identity and persistence beyond death. When Christ rebukes the Sadducees for their unbelief in the "resurrection of the dead" (His recognition of which is meaningless unless it applies to the individual dead), He bases His argument on the fact that God calls Himself "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," yet He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all (*i.e.*, all individual human beings, even those we call the dead) live unto Him.[1] On the Mount of Transfiguration, individual saints (Moses and Elijah) actually living the unseen life, appeared and talked with Him.[2] Finally, there was His own Resurrection, proclaiming louder than any teaching, however authoritative, could do, the reality of human individual life beyond death, and after the Ascension, His appearance to St Paul and in vision to St John.

[1] Mark xii. 26; Luke xx. 38. [2] Matt. xvii. 3; Mark ix. 3.

We may further say that our Lord recognised differences in the life after death depending upon the kind of life which each individual had lived on earth. There is, of course, as every reader will at once recall, His distinct teaching of reward and punishment, in the parables of Dives and Lazarus, and of the Talents, and in His discourse on the last Judgment.

To this subject (of reward and punishment,) we will return later on. It by no means exhausts the direct teaching of Christ on Immortality. He tells the Sadducees that "when the dead rise, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven,"[1] intimating, therefore, that the conditions of life will be different to those we know now. He says to the penitent thief:[2] "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," showing that there is no break in consciousness or identity, and to the young ruler: "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven."[3] It is to be remarked with regard to this last

[1] Matt. xii. 25; Luke xx. 34-37. [2] Luke xxii. 43.
[3] Matt. xix. 21; Mark x. 21; Luke xviii. 22.

quotation that our Lord did not threaten any punishment here or hereafter if the possessions were not sold, but simply said that if they were, the renunciation, for the sake of doing good, of this world's riches would mean greater spiritual riches in the life beyond death. The same teaching is given in the celebrated promise to His disciples: "Everyone that hath left houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother, or children or lands for My name's sake (or as it is in St Luke, 'for the Kingdom of God's sake') shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life."[1] Lastly, there occur in the Discourse before the Passion, those words which have strengthened the hearts of thousands in bereavement and sorrow: "In My Father's house are many abiding places. If it were not so, I would have told you."[2] Perhaps nowhere more strongly than in this passage does Christ assert His knowledge of the life to come. "There are," he says, speaking with the calm distinctness of one to whom the matter in question is familiar, "many abiding places," conditions, environments, suitable to all characters, to all stages in the spiritual life.

[1] Matt. xix. 29. [2] John xiv. 2.

But mightier than any revelation that could be made by words was that of the forty days' Risen Life of Christ on earth. This it was that so deeply penetrated the apostles' whole spiritual outlook, so moulded their conception of the work of evangelisation that they, especially St Paul, make the Resurrection the pillar of their teaching, as central as the Crucifixion itself. The Resurrection was the token that the sacrifice of the Cross was accepted. The apostles were "witnesses of the Resurrection," and as such received a special insight into the meaning of the death. "Who died for our sins and rose again for our justification." "If we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection. . . . For the death that He died, He died unto sin once, but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God."[1] The death, we are taught, issued naturally in the Resurrection, death could not hold the Lord of Life. "God raised [Him] up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."[2] And as

[1] Rom. vi. 5, 10. [2] Acts ii. 24.

He Himself taught, His indissoluble life is the pledge and assurance of ours. "Because I live, ye shall live also."[1] "I am the Resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me though he die yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die."[2]

These great words, in conjunction with our Lord's saying: "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ," are the key to the whole meaning of Immortality from the Christian Standpoint. They show that the foundation of our deathlessness lies in Him, and that the power of His Life is supreme over all obstacles, including physical death. They also, in conjunction with many other passages, point out that since the Divine Ideal of human life is the life of Christ, manifested before death under earthly, and after death under non-earthly conditions, His risen life is the norm of the risen life of men. "Father, those whom Thou hast given Me, I will that where I am, there they may be also."[3]

[1] John xvii. 3. [2] John xi. 25.

[3] John xvii. 24.

"As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive — Christ the first fruits . . . ."[1] "As we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly."[2] "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory."[3]

These are but examples of many similar passages which any student of the New Testament can read and compare for himself. The witnesses of our Lord's Resurrection had seen, and ever bore in mind the truth that He was not a spirit only, but was clothed in a real body, the perfect expression of His (human) spiritual life. Further, they were assured that the death through which He had triumphantly passed had not affected His identity nor severed His connection with the earthly life that had gone before it. This He Himself repeatedly demonstrated to them. "See My hands and My feet that it is I Myself, handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having,"[4] and to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger and see My hands,

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 22.
[2] 1 Cor. xv. 49.
[3] Phil. iii. 21.
[4] Luke xxiv. 39.

and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing."[1] Believe, that is, that I am the same Lord with whom you held daily intercourse when in My body of humiliation. "It is I Myself," glorified indeed, yet whose experience before death is so indelibly wrought into the essence of My life that it would not be fully expressed unless its physical manifestation bore the marks of My Passion. There can be no plainer assurance than this of the continuity of our Lord's human life before and after death. We may therefore pass on to other considerations, bearing in mind that this continuity of Christ's human individuality means the continuity of every man's. According to New Testament teaching it will be "I myself" to each one in the life to come. There will be the same unique individuality retaining under whatever different conditions the "marks" and the memory of those experiences of suffering, of sorrow, of joy which are the warp and woof of the earthly life, so common that they make all men brothers, yet so distinct and peculiar in each case that no other has been or can be identical with it.

[1] John xx. 27.

2. In passing on to consider the Christian Ideal of immortality, we shall find it so centred about this continuity of individual life before and after death, that the latter truth will be constantly reappearing in new connections and under new aspects. For instance, one great aspect under which it is regarded is the fulfilment and completion of our life here. "Ourselves also which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit the redemption of our body."[1] "[The body] is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body."[2] "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain . . . . But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better."[3] "We that are in this bodily frame do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that what

[1] Romans viii. 23. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 42–45.
[3] Phil. i., part of 21 and of 23; *cp.* ii. 21.

is mortal may be swallowed up of life."[1] "Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been known fully."[2]

This individual completion, which in the above and many other passages of the New Testament is so distinctly set forth as part of our "inheritance" of immortality, has always been accepted by the Christian Church. The conception of what such completion means, however, has been unduly narrowed, and it is in great part due to this cause that in the period through which we are passing the "heavenly horizon" has grown blurred and faint to many as truly Christian in aspiration and effort as those early martyrs who felt earth not heaven to be the illusion. It is not so much historical criticism or lack of scientific proof which shakes Christian confidence in the "life everlasting," as the inherent weakness of the ideal formed of it. Nor is the reason far to seek.

Whatever may be the drawbacks of Western Civilisation, there can be no doubt of the increased variety and complexity of life it has brought about. There never has

[1] 2 Cor. v. 4. [2] 1 Cor. xiii.

been a time when so large a number of interests, so many branches of knowledge, such wide fields of activity, were opened up to mankind as now, and as a consequence life is to a vast number of people fuller to an almost immeasurable extent than it was to their progenitors some hundreds of years ago. There are those, as we know, who are very far from considering this state of things an unmixed advantage,—even as an advantage at all; but the fact remains, and it inevitably affects our whole mental attitude. A man of the twentieth century, though he be of mediocre culture and intelligence, has a wider outlook, a larger experience than the most highly endowed intellect of the tenth century could attain. Yet our conception of immortality has filtered down to us through the dark ages. It is still tainted by their narrowness of outlook, their lack of scientific knowledge, their opposition of the natural to the supernatural, and we can hardly be surprised that it fails to satisfy or to attract a generation before which such amazing vistas of the universe have opened out. It is true indeed that to the saints of all ages, to those who, whatever their intellectual

attainments may be or may not be, to whatever grade of society or culture they belong, are the spiritual salt of the earth, one desire, one possibility is alone present in their hope of immortality, the perfect consciousness of the Divine Presence, that "sight" of God which is the especial blessing of the pure in heart. To such as these no other belief regarding immortality is possible or desirable, save that that highest aspiration should be fully satisfied. But such single-hearted lovers of God, those to whom God only, God always, is consciously the Supreme Object of their desire, have ever been in a minority. There are many different types and castes of human character, and in life beyond as in life before death, room is needed for all. Christians should not have difficulty in realising this, yet they to whom no children of the Divine Father should be common or unclean seem frequently to regard one class of mind alone as fully acceptable to Him, the saintly, in the conventional sense of the term. This narrow conception is greatly owing to the undue exaltation of the contemplative over the active side of the Christian life which for long obtained in the Church.

It was an inevitable consequence of the "dark ages" when intellectual and spiritual culture were alike hard to come by, and could only be preserved under the hot-house conditions of the cloister. Such a one-sided ideal leads to as mistaken a conception of the life to come as of life on earth. The latter we have corrected. We no longer draw the sharp line between the "religious" (*i.e.*, the conventual,) life and that of the world which our fathers drew. The best religious thought of our day recognises that Christianity claims as its own all art, all science, all culture, all philanthropy, that no department of life or of service lies outside religion. But our grasp of the sacredness of activity, the consecration of knowledge, even of affection, is most frequently limited to the sphere of earth. Beyond there seems nothing before us but a life of passive contemplation. We can form no conception of it save that it will bring us rest, freedom from care and sorrow and evil, be a condition of negative beatitude in fact, to the thought of which, at times of sick weariness with the restlessness and turmoil of the world, we turn with joy and relief, but which has no attraction for the

young, the strong, the healthfully busy, the happy.

There is a fundamental error here which it is well worth while to track and refute. The spirit of the New Testament teaching on this subject gives us, as chief objects of hope, untrammelled service of the Divine Father, unlimited development of our own capacities both of body and spirit. We are therefore wrong if we fix our eyes only on rest; we are injuring those whose greatest need and desire is not to cease from activity but to be granted full scope for it.

Some may regard such an ideal as too material to be permissible from the Christian standpoint, and if material is to be taken as a synonym for sensual, then it is true that there is no place for the material in the Christian conception of life, either present or to come. The restriction of human beings to, or their absorption in the life of the senses is inimical to every spiritual religion, to Christianity most because it is most spiritual, because there is in it no lower path for the ordinary man, no esoteric mysteries for the initiated, but the same

demand made on each and all, to live up to the highest they know.

But if by "material" be intended man's relationship to the natural universe, nay, that universe itself in all the marvels of its known order, with all the dimly hinted possibilities of what may yet become known, then the Christian conception of immortality embraces that relationship, applies to that universe. One of the "notes" of Christianity is that it neither ignores, condemns, nor supersedes the natural, but raises it to a new dignity and confers upon it a larger scope, by treating it as itself the expression and the pledge of spirit. According to New Testament teaching, the universe of Nature is a spiritual creation,[1] which in the Divine ideal of it is throughout "very good," and which in its actual state of (to human perception) non-attainment, groans and travails together with man until the adoption, that is the redemption of the body;[2] until, that is, the material expression is so perfectly moulded to the spiritual meaning that the latter shines forth undimmed in its eternal

[1] Col. i. 15-17. [2] Romans viii. 19-24.

beauty and splendour. Man's intellect, affections, moral consciousness are spiritual attributes, none the less so that not having themselves attained to the Divine Ideal, and being therefore imperfect, they are expressed through the imperfect medium of the "natural body." Christianity does not teach that when this medium fails, human knowledge, love, righteousness are to be without expression, but that a more fitting expression is to be given them. First the natural expression, afterwards that which is spiritual, for *if* there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body. If, that is, under earthly conditions, man needs an earthly body and an earthly environment by means of which to express what he is and does, so under conditions which are not earthly but which are and must be *human*, he will need a human though a non-earthly environment for the same reason—to express his being and his activity.

Thus the true Christian Ideal of the completion of each human individual by means of immortality, is the completion of the *whole man*, body, mind and spirit. It is the whole man whom Christ loves and

redeems; it is the whole man for whom an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" is reserved.[1]

A second aspect of the Christian Ideal of Immortality is equally with the one we have just been considering, bound up with the continuity of individual life before and after death, viz., reward and punishment. This subject has been allowed in past ages to loom too largely, or rather too exclusively, in the teaching of the Christian Church with regard to immortality, and consequently a reaction has set in, and we find one of the reproaches cast upon the Faith is that it should lend itself to such unexalted motives as the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. But it is not possible to say with honesty that our Lord did not appeal to them. His teaching was intended not only for those whose pure unselfishness of aim and motive was akin to His own, but also for those who were on a lower spiritual plane, who had not yet attained the liberty of children, but were under bondage, the bondage of sin and ignorance. Even to His immediate followers — to those whose

[1] 1 Peter i. 4.

ear was opened to His teaching, He spoke of the higher fear casting out the lower. "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to kill both soul and body in hell."[1] And again, He told them in strong words that it was better to enter into the Kingdom of God, or as St Mark has it "into life," maimed, than "to be cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"[2] At the same time it is wholly misleading, and even absurd, to take such sayings of our Lord as these, and presume to define their meaning apart from His whole revelation. We cannot understand the significance of any part of Christ's teaching if we isolate it.

Even the words above quoted, which seem not only terrible but cruel by themselves, would bear a very different meaning if they were always taken in connection with those which immediately follow: "For everyone shall be salted with fire."[3] The merciful intention of purification through suffering

[1] Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4, 5. [2] Mark ix. 49.
[3] Mark ix. 56.

would then stand out in letters of light. The fire is not quenched, but when it has done its work, when the purging flames have consumed the corruption which it is their province to destroy, then the spirit is "salted"; purified and ennobled, it passes beyond their power. That "fire" is indeed regarded in the New Testament as the symbol of a purifying agent is evident from other passages than the above. Thus, St Paul, referring to the various labourers who build up the Church on "the one foundation," says: "But if any man buildeth on the foundation, gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, *but he himself shall be saved yet so as through fire.*"[1] Again, St Peter, referring to the sufferings of the faithful, regards them as "the proof of your faith being more precious than gold

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 12-16.

*which perisheth though it be tried with fire,*"[1] as though that which was cast into the spiritual furnace, differs from gold in that it is not perishable. Passages setting forth purification by fire should be remembered whenever "the hell of fire," or the "lake of fire," or "eternal punishment" is mentioned. We cannot understand the expressions otherwise. But the real true significance of spiritual reward and punishment is only to be seen in the revelation of "the Father," the revelation which the Word became Flesh to make. The reward is the Father's reward, the punishment is the Father's punishment, to correct, to reform, to raise, to purify, not for any other purpose whatsoever, either before or after death.

Without doubt, one great difficulty in the way of our regarding spiritual reward and punishment in a clear and reasonable light, is the capricious interpretation which the "Dark" and "Middle" Ages put upon them, and from which we have not as yet been able to shake ourselves entirely free.

In past centuries, when even the most cultivated intellects were unable to recognise be-

[1] 1 Peter i. 7.

neath the apparent lawlessness of the Universe its vast and unchanging order, it was inevitable that spiritual truths also should be invested with a certain amount of arbitrariness. Thus the "reward" of the just, equally with the punishment of the unjust, was regarded as not in essential connection with the life which had merited either. Consequently the former could be bought by certain rites, ceremonies, and benefactions, the latter could be avoided in much the same way, by indulgences, penances, gifts of money to ecclesiastical purposes, etc. It was not clearly understood that the punishment of a sinful life was wrought out by that life itself, and was of the kind which the particular sins indulged in must inevitably entail, just as a burned hand must inevitably follow the thrusting of it into the fire. The punishment of sin, equally with the wages of virtue, is progress in the path chosen. Browning has finely illustrated this in his description of the man found at the Last Judgment choosing earthly before spiritual joys. His sentence is to possess that which he has chosen, earth, but without the power which he in common with all men had

hitherto possessed, of looking, if he would, beyond the transitory and apparent to the real and abiding.

"Thou saidst,—'Let spirit star the dome
Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
No nook of earth—I shall not seek
Its service further.' Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
Thy sense upon the world; 'tis thine
For ever—take it!

"'How? Is mine
The world?' I cried (while my soul broke
Out in a transport). 'Hast thou spoke
Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
Treasures of wonder and delight,
For me?'

"The austere voice returned:
'So soon made happy? Had'st thou learned
What God accounteth happiness,
Thou would'st not find it hard to guess
What hell may be His punishment
For those who doubt if God invent
Better than they. Let such men rest
Content with what they judged the best.
Let the unjust usurp at will:
The filthy shall be filthy still.
Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
Hater, indulge thine enmity!
And thou whose heaven self-ordained
Was to enjoy earth unrestrained,
Do it! take all the ancient show

. . . . . .

*I promise not thou shalt forget*
*The past now gone to its account,*
But leave thee with the old amount,
Of faculties, nor less nor more,
*Unvisited as heretofore*
*By God's free Spirit that makes an end.'* " [1]

Further quotation from a poem familiar to almost all readers is unnecessary, but the italicised lines contain the crux of the whole matter, indicating alike the cause of the extreme anguish of the punishment and the possibility (more clearly developed later,) that it is purgatorial, not penal merely, "I promise not thou shalt forget the past." "It is I myself—I who might have judged that the use of flesh 'was to refine to nerve beneath the spirit's play,' who might have chosen to follow 'the spirit's fugitive brief gleams,' until they issued in the unveiled light of God. It is I myself who have thrust away my spiritual inheritance, have fixed myself where 'God's free Spirit, that makes an end,' no longer penetrates. It is I myself who have lost myself." That is the keen edge of the suffering, a very sword of the Spirit before which the man shrinks and quails.

[1] "Easter Day."

But because he can thus suffer, hope has not altogether departed, the pain that an immortal spirit condemned to dwell amongst shadows must experience, so clears his vision that at the end of the poem we find him whose one desire had been the enjoyment of earthly life to the full, exclaiming :—

> "'How dreadful to be grudged
> No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,
> Condemned to earth for ever, shut
> From heaven.'"

And we are left with the closing note of hope :—

> "But Easter Day breaks! But
> Christ rises! Mercy every way
> Is infinite, and who can say?"

And, needless to say, the same remarks apply *mutatis mutandis* to reward. This is no arbitrary bliss bestowed upon all alike who at some time or other of their lives,—it may be upon their death-bed,—have "made their peace with God." It is the inevitable consequence of the aim and endeavour after the highest (according to the light of each individual,) in thought and practice: of the unworldly temper of mind, which, in what-

ever way shown, however painfully connected with a sense of failure and shortcoming, yet recognises that earth is but in some sense or other a prelude, a forecast, an intimation of something better, nobler, more worthy of attainment than itself, "God's ante-chamber" by whose variegated "arras folds"

> "The wise who waited there could tell
> . . . what royalties in store
> Lay one step past the entrance door."

But as the sharpest edge of punishment lies in the realisation of what might have been, only possible because what might have been is continuous with what is, so the supreme reward, or one element in the supreme reward, is the knowledge that what is, is essentially connected with what was. "It is I myself,—I who strove and fell, and rose to strive again, blinded, maimed, scarcely daring to hope I could attain, yet keeping amid all darkness, amid all defeat even, the unquenchable desire of the highest, I have been found faithful, my feet are set for ever upon the upward path, and to me is given my heart's desire." And if that desire has not known and does not yet know itself to

be none other than the thirst for the Divine, God is not straitened in the means whereby He will in the life beyond draw those who have been true to the light they had under earthly conditions, into full apprehension of and participation in that supreme desire, the response to which is the vision of Himself.

And thus we are brought to what is in truth the consummation of the Christian Ideal of immortality, perfect union with (not mergence in) the Divine. "For the last enemy that shall be abolished is death," the only real death, that spiritual death which divides us from God, which causes many now on earth, and many beyond the grave, to drag on a miserable degraded existence, shorn of all the glory that should be theirs, whelmed in darkness, without hope, and, to human understanding, without help. But the things that are impossible with men are possible with God, "for the [Son] must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet," and His life on earth showed us clearly the Son of Man's enemies—not men, but the destroyers of men—unbelief, hatred, impurity, all moral evil and all physical evil —all that separates men from one another,

and from God. "The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For He [the Father], put all things in subjection under His [the Son's] feet. But when He saith all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all."[1] Not that men will ever be swallowed up in God to the loss of their conscious individuality, "not that Christ will ever put off His humanity, or that we shall ever cease to need Him, for even at the climax of all things, He will still be the Life and the Truth. We shall see the Father face to face, but only because we shall be one Spirit with the Lord. In this sense only the work of redemption and mediation will have an end. We shall see the Father no longer [only] in the Son, but *as the Son sees Him*, in the day when God shall be all in all."[2]

To see "the Father face to face," this

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 25-29.
[2] "Christian Platonists," p. 170, Bigg.

is indeed the highest height, the utmost reach to which even the Christian Ideal of immortality can attain. To know as we are known.[1] To love as we are loved, to become as Him whom we behold,[2] to serve Him with all our being,[3] for it is not passive contemplation alone, which, to human beings, is the consummation of all things, but the pure whole-hearted, effectual service of love to Him who is Love. At a lower stage than this the highest, most constantly during the period of dim vision and uncertain knowledge, which marks our earthly pilgrimage, we need the reiterated assurance that in the life beyond "we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more,"[4] (not even after righteousness, for we shall be filled,) that "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, that there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be pain any more, for the first things are passed away."[5] But when we once have our vision so purged that it is "face to face," then we know that we *have* all things, for

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 John iii. 2.
[2] 1 John v. 20.
[3] Rev. vii. 15, and xxii. 3, 4.
[4] Rev. vii. 16.
[5] Rev. xxii., and John xvii.

"we know Him that is true," the Father; and we "are in Him that is true," the Son. Illusion, disappointment, uncertainty, have no place, and, therefore, as the Son has taught us, we are in possession of eternal life, the life which is without beginning or end, the life which unites all in the knowledge and love of the Father through the Son.

But it is not part of this supreme ideal that we should cease to love one another or identify one another. The Beatific Vision will not render us cold and unresponsive to finite love. On the contrary, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God."[1] Love is of the very essence of the Divine, it cannot die. Its individual manifestations are not of those first things which "pass away." They are eternal, needing, indeed, on earth, to be tested by fire, for under present conditions, love, mighty though it be, shares in our limitations, is tainted by our self-concentration, is defiled by our sin. Its purification will but give it more strength, more intensity, more insight, and when the final illumina-

[1] 1 John iv. 7.

tion is reached, when the temporal falls from us entirely, and free from its shadow we stand in the eternal alone, the Vision of the Father face to face, will involve such perfect vision and understanding of our beloved, as our highest aspirations here are too faint to imagine.

3. We now reach the last stage of the enquiry which was proposed. Does this Christian Ideal of individual continuity of life, individual completion, individual attainment of the open Vision of God, and of man in God, suffice not merely for all men, but for each man? It is clear that one reservation at any rate must be made. Evil aspirations are debarred. The desires begotten of greed, selfishness, lust, avarice, hatred, can look for no fulfilment. These are equally inimical to the Divine Ideal of every human being. It is because of them that the fire which is not quenched, the worm that dieth not, are necessary, so long as even one of the sons of God has not learned to repudiate the corruption which it is the part of the suffering imaged by fire and worms to destroy. On the contrary, there is no *human* aspiration (for evil is not human, it is the nega-

tion of the Divine intention for human nature, as it is the negation of the Divine Nature Itself), which does not find a response in the Christian Ideal of Immortality. Is it rest that we need? "There remaineth a rest for the people of God."[1] Is it a larger sphere of activity, a greater scope for service? "Thou has been faithful over a few things. I will set thee over many things."[2] "His servants shall serve Him."[3] Is it recognition of individual merit? "To him that overcometh I will give . . . a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written which none knoweth save he that receiveth it."[4] "He that overcometh . . . I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."[5] Is it deserved honour? "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life."[6] "He that overcometh I will give to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne."[7] Is it reunion with our beloved? The restoration of Lazarus to his sisters,[8] the command "not to sorrow as those that have

[1] Heb. iv. 9-11. [2] Matt. xxv. 21-23. [3] Rev. xxii. 3.
[4] Rev. ii. 17. [5] Rev. iii. 5. [6] Rev. ii. 10.
[7] Rev. iii. 21. [8] John xi. 1-45.

no hope,"[1] the allusion to "the cloud of witnesses" that even now watch unseen our earthly conflict,[2] the fact that the risen human Christ held familiar intercourse with His disciples, more than all the assertion that God is Love, and that all love of human beings for one another is of Him,[3] assures us that in the Christian Ideal of Immortality no individual love shall be lost. The craving for knowledge, for truth, for beauty, for moral and spiritual perfection is equally recognised, equally promised satisfaction, as has already been pointed out.

What remains then? Only that we should realise the fulness of our inheritance, that we should not "faint" under the difficulties, the perplexities, the physical and mental suffering which make so large a part of our life here, "for though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 13. [2] Heb. xii. 1.
[3] 1 John iv. 7-9.

which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."[1] And those "unseen" eternal things are not in the future, they are here with us now. In the future they will be seen, now they are our invisible support, stay and consolation. This is the truth we must lay hold of, if the reality of the connection between this earthly part of our life and that which is to follow is to become clear to us. It is not the neglect of earthly duties, the coldness towards earthly sorrows or earthly joys, that gives us the strongest hold on and widest apprehension of the immortality of our being. It is a spirit far different from this which we need, a spirit that regards the fulfilment of duty and not its present reward or recognition as the thing of importance; a spirit which because of the transitoriness of disappointment and bereavement can be strong and even cheerful under them. And further, a spirit which realises that every activity of human nature is a sacred thing, a thing which may be defiled, defamed, prostituted to low uses, but yet in the

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

Divine Ideal of it is altogether noble, beautiful, worthy of all honour, not destined to perish in the using, but to be trained to ever higher and higher perfection till its scope, compared to what we in our present ignorance suppose, is illimitable. Belief in the continuity of our individual life before and after death will serve to raise the present, however seemingly sordid, to a dignity it could not otherwise attain, and yet will enable us to triumph over all its trials, however keen, in the hope and strength of the future to which it leads. "Prove to mankind," said Mazzini, "that the earthly duties to be fulfilled here are part of their immortal life, and all the calculations of the present will vanish before the grandeur of the future."

This verily is our need, to live in the strong conviction that *this* life is part of our immortal life. No wrong-doing then will seem insignificant, no duty trivial or impossible, no sorrow overwhelming, for we shall begin to realise that we are indeed sons of God, and that He freely gives us all things. "For all things are yours, whether . . . . the world, or life, or death,

or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."[1]

"*Wherefore . . . be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"[2]

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 22. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 58.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